薫る花は凛と咲く 15

三香見サカ

Saka Mikami

kaoruhanawa rintosaku

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

Chapter 110: Their Respective February

CHIPPY うき

うき CHIPPY

THAT CHEERY ATTITUDE IS HONESTLY GIVING ME THE CREEPS...

RIGHT BEFORE THE EXAM SEASON, TOO...

WELL...

TWIRL

TWIRL

NEVER WOULD I HAVE IMAGINED THAT FEBRUARY COULD BE THIS EXCITING!

KLOK

AFTER ALL, THIS YEAR...

WELL SAID!

WE MIGHT HAVE TO DEAL WITH EXAMS, BUT THIS MONTH'S ALSO VALENTINE'S, REMEMBER?

Ding, ding, ding!

We're gonna prepare chocolate for everyone, so let's meet up after the final exams!

I'M ABSOLUTELY GETTING SOME CHOCOLATE FOR ONCE!

HOW SO?

I'M THANKFUL TO THOSE TWO.

WELL, I GET WHERE YOU'RE COMING FROM...

I'M JUST SO HAPPY!

BLESS YOUR PURE HEART...

WHEN THEY STUDIED TOGETHER FOR THEIR FIRST YEAR'S FINAL EXAMS...

HIS FACE... LOOKS DEAD...

Why am I even working this hard if I have to go empty-handed on Valentine's?! Why does our school have to be only guys?!

YEAH, HE'D ALWAYS WINE ABOUT THE GUYS FROM CO-ED SCHOOLS AND THOSE WITH GIRLFRIENDS AND CURSE THEM OUT.

End me...

Seems like I'll be able to avoid that this year.

YOU WERE A MAJOR PAIN IN MY BUTT LAST YEAR, AFTER ALL.

AFTER ALL, WE'VE GOT ONE GUY HERE WHO'LL BE GETTING GENUINE VALENTINE'S CHOCOLATE.

!

BUT THAT ASIDE, THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE THAT'S DIFFERENT.

WHERE'S THAT BACKLIGHT COMING FROM?

EVERYONE WAS EXPECTING USAMI TO LOSE HIS COOL IN FEBRUARY AGAIN...

OH, GOOD FOR YOU, RINTARO...

LET'S JUST HOPE NOBODY FINDS OUT ABOUT HER.

WAGURI-SAN'S GONNA GIVE YOU SOME, RIGHT?

W-WELL, YEAH...

HOLD ON...

...!

NO NEED TO LOOK SO DISGUSTED.

...

ANYWAY, LET'S GET BACK TO STUDYING, INSTRUCTOR NATSUSAWA.

NATSU-SAWA... IS THAT YOURS?

T-University Sciences

Mathematics Question Collection

HUH? OH, YEAH...

HOLD ON... T-UNIVER-SITY?!

SAKU, YOU'RE TRYING TO GET INTO T-UNIVERSITY?!

WEREN'T YOU TOTALLY AGAINST THE IDEA WHEN WE LAST TALKED ABOUT IT?

NAH, I WASN'T COMPLETELY AGAINST IT OR ANYTHING.

AT THE END OF THE MONTH, I'M GOING TO TAKE T-UNIVERSITY'S MOCK EXAM TOGETHER WITH HOSHINA-SAN...

...SO I FIGURED I MIGHT AS WELL DO AS MUCH AS I CAN IN PREPARATION.

T-University Sciences

...WAIT, HOSHINA-SAN IS AIMING FOR T-UNIVERSITY?!

NOT THAT HE'S GOING THERE WITH HOSHINA-SAN?!

THAT'S CRAZY...

COME AGAIN?!

YOU MET UP WITH NATSU-SAWA-KUN?! JUST THE TWO OF YOU?!

IS THAT... SUCH A SHOCK TO YOU?

YOU BET IT IS!

ALSO... HOW AND WHY DID THAT HAPPEN?

I ASKED HIM TO TEACH ME...

SINCE THERE WERE A FEW THINGS THAT I DIDN'T UNDER-STAND WHILE PREPARING FOR THE T-UNIVERSITY MOCK EXAM.

HE'S AMAZING, REALLY.

HE EVEN SAID HE'D COME WITH ME TO THE MOCK EXAM.

...

HE HAD NO ISSUE GOING THROUGH THE WORKBOOK I BROUGHT WITH ME.

I WAS RATHER WORRIED ABOUT GOING THERE ALL BY MYSELF, SO THAT MADE ME HAPPY.

MEETING WITH A BOY TO HANG OUT... SHE'S COME SO FAR!

TEARY

I NEED TO THANK NATSUSAWA-KUN AND THE OTHERS LATER!

DOES THAT MEAN... I CAN DIG DEEPER?!

NOW HOLD THE PHONE... IS THIS WHAT I THINK IT IS?!

NO, WAIT... IT'S SUBARU WE'RE DEALING WITH HERE, SO I MAY VERY WELL BE INTERPRETING TOO MUCH INTO THIS... BUT THEN AGAIN...!

GASP

I WAS RATHER WORRIED ABOUT GOING THERE ALL BY MYSELF, SO THAT MADE ME HAPPY.

...

WHAT DID I MEAN...?

LEAN

NGH!

WH-WHEN YOU SAY THAT YOU WERE HAPPY...

WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY THAT?!

...IF YOU HAD A FRIEND WITH YOU FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

I just said I'd be worried to go alone, right?

WELL, WOULDN'T YOU BE RELIEVED...

SO SHE'D FEEL THE SAME WAY EVEN IF THIS WAS ABOUT USAMI-KUN OR YORITA-KUN...

I... GUESS SO...

OH DEAR... SHE REALLY DOESN'T THINK ANY-THING SPECIAL ABOUT IT.

WHOOPS! MY BAD!

MGH

ALSO, YOU'RE GOING TO SUFFOCATE KAORUKO AT THIS RATE.

AC-TUAL-LY...

I ALREADY FEEL BAD FOR THE POOR SOUL WHO'S EVENTUALLY GONNA FALL IN LOVE WITH SUBARU...

SUUU

I WONDER...

...HOW NATSUSAWA-KUN FEELS ABOUT ALL OF THIS.

SO, KAORUKO... WHAT KIND OF CHOCOLATE ARE YOU PLANNING ON GIVING TO TSUMUGI-KUN?

WUEH?!

OH, I WAS CURIOUS ABOUT THAT, TOO.

NOT LIKE THINKING ABOUT IT WILL GIVE ME AN ANSWER!

WELP!

Too difficult for me!

...

SAKU, YOU'RE TRYING TO GET INTO T-UNIVERSITY?

I'M GOING TO TAKE T-UNIVERSITY'S MOCK EXAM TOGETHER WITH HOSHINA-SAN, SO I FIGURED I MIGHT AS WELL DO AS MUCH AS I CAN IN PREPARATION.

...

カリカリ

...I WENT WITH "UNDECIDED" WHEN HANDING IN THE CAREER SURVEY...

B

D

Undecided
Decided

IN THE END...

the nam

the s

I ACTUALLY WANT TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER.

I FEEL LIKE I FINALLY FOUND AN ANSWER I'M HAPPY WITH.

THE REST COMES ALONG THE WAY, OR SO I THINK AT LEAST.

WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT IS THAT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY REGRETS LATER.

WHENEVER YOU HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION...

IS ALREADY AMAZING IN ITS OWN RIGHT.

TO US, JUST HAVING FOUND SOMETHING YOU WANT TO DO NO MATTER WHAT.

AFTER WHAT HAPPENED AT THE END OF LAST YEAR, NOT TO MENTION THAT WHOLE ORDEAL WITH YORITA...

I'VE BEEN GIVING IT SOME THOUGHT MYSELF, BUT...

...I STILL DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER.

HUEH?! FOR REAL?!

I NEVER ACTUALLY PLANNED O BECOMING PÂTISSIER

AS OF RIGHT NOW...

BUT SEE NG IT AS MY JOB IS SOMETHING I'M NOT COMPLETELY SURE ABOUT

IT'S A DIFFICULT QUES-TION

I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT THIS MYSELF, TOO..

BOTH DAD AND MY BROTHER HAVE TURNED THEIR HOBBIES AND NTERESTS NTO A JOB

SO SINCE I ENJOY BAKING CAKES, I SHOULD BECOME A PÂTISSIER, RIGHT?

!

PUNG

Kaoruko Waguri
We were going to meet up on the 18th after exams are done, right?

IT'S FROM KAORUKO-SAN.

I WONDER IF SHE'S GONNA BRING CHOCOLATE WITH HER THAT DAY. SHE DID SAY SHE'D GIVE ME SOME...

Yeah, works.

Great, thanks!

HER... HOMEMADE CHOCO-LATE...

Great, thanks!

I'll bring homemade chocolate with me, too!

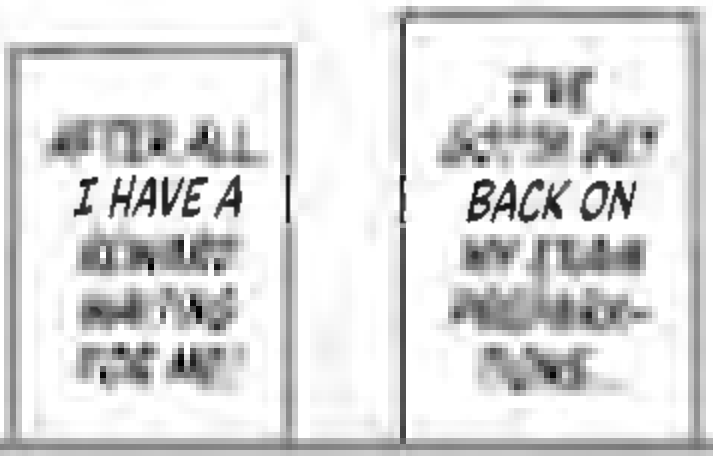
WELL...

TAK

TAK

I FEEL LIKE I GET WHY USAMI...

...GOT ALL CHEERY ABOUT GETTING CHOCO-LATE.



Thanks,
I'm looking
forward to it.

I
REAL-
LY...
...PUSH
MY OWN
GRAVE
WITH
THAT,
HUH?

I ONLY RAISED THE DIFFICULTY LEVEL FOR MYSELF!

...BUT WHAT DO I DO NOW?

I DID PLAN TO MAKE HOMEMADE CHOCOLATE FOR HIM...

...REALLY GIVE SOMETHING HOMEMADE TO THE VERY PERSON WHO MADE ALL THOSE DELICIOUS CAKES FOR ME?!

CAN AN AMATEUR AT BAKING SWEETS...

はぁ…

HE'S LOOKING FORWARD TO IT, AFTER ALL.

I'LL JUST HAVE TO GIVE IT A SHOT.

...

JUST HOPE... HE LIKES THE CHOCOLATE I MAKE FOR HIM...

ALL RIGHT! BETTER GET BACK TO STUDYING!

I'D RATHER NOT GET BACK THE RESULTS IF YOU ASK ME!

IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE!

EXAMS ARE OVER! WE'RE **FINISHED!**

Let's head home right away!

SORRY, WE GOTTA BE SOMEWHERE! BUT NEXT TIME FOR SURE, THOUGH!

AGREED! OH, RIGHT.

THAT WAS A QUICK RECOV-ERY.

SO, LET'S HANG OUT SOME-WHERE!

AH...

YOU GUYS! WANNA TAG ALONG?

FAREWELL, MY BRETHREN.

I SWEAR I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM THIS CHEERFUL.

WHY'S THAT GUY SO HAPPY-GO-LUCKY LATELY?

ALL RIGHT, GOTCHA!

ACTUALLY, JUST TELL ME ONE THING...

OH BOY, HERE WE GO...

FWIP

USAMI, IT CAN'T BE...!

WHISPER

'CAUSE HE DIDN'T GET ANY CHOCOLATE FOR VALENTINE'S...

WASN'T HE STILL DEPRESSED EVEN AFTER LAST YEAR'S FINALS?

HMM...

ACTUALLY, NOW THAT YOU SAY THAT...

WELL, WHO ELSE SHOULD WE ASK, THEN?

THAT IS ONE NASTY EXCUSE TO COOK UP.

FOR REAL?!

ACTUALLY, HE GOT SOME CHOCOLATE FROM A YOUNG GIRL THAT'S ATTENDING AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

HE WOULD TAKE ANYTHING AT THIS POINT, HUH...

TOTAL LIE!

SORRY!

TSUMUGI! NO RUN-NING IN THE HALL-WAY!

TAT

GONNA MISS MY TRAIN AT THIS RATE...!

TAT

WHERE'D TSUMUGI GO?

紅が丘駅
Benigaoka Sta.

SH Bar

そわ…
FIDGET

SHOULD BE HERE ANY MINUTE NOW...

紅が丘デパ
Benigaoka

OH!

HEY, RIN-TARO-KUN...

SORRY FOR THE WAIT...

??!

しお
HEIT

しお
HEIT

WOOOO!

Ichige Park

Wow!

He's crying...

CHOCOLATE... FOR ME...!

NO, THAT'S TOTALLY FINE! I'M STILL REALLY HAPPY!

THANKS.

THANKS A LOT!

WE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO MAKE CHOCOLATE OURSELVES BECAUSE OF THE EXAMS AND ALL, SO...

Not to mention Subaru's mock exam...

I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D BE THIS HAPPY ABOUT IT...

OH, ABSO-LUTELY!

BUT ENOUGH OF THAT.

I FEEL LIKE YOUR FINALS ARE PROBABLY A STEP ABOVE OURS AT CHIDORI.

MAYBE YOU SHOULD ALSO TRY FOR MID-TERMS AND ALL THE OTHER TESTS, TOO

YUP! AND YOU KNOW THAT EVEN I HAD TO GIVE IT SOME EFFORT FOR THE FINAL EXAMS!

YOUR EXAMS ENDED YESTERDAY, RIGHT?

!

RIGHT ABOUT NOW, WAGURI-SAN SHOULD BE GIVING HER CHOCOLATE TO RINTARO, NO?

ERM ...

WE MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE WHEN WE SAID WE DIDN'T WANT ANY CHOCOLATE FROM HER, RIGHT?

THAT WAY, SHE CAN FOCUS ON RINTARO'S CHOCOLATE AND PUT HER HEART INTO IT.

WELL... ABOUT THAT...

...

WHY ARE YOU TWO SO TONGUE-TIED?

Chapter 101: Valentine's Day

R-RIGHT, THANK YOU!

WHAT IS THIS, SOME PERIOD DRAMA?

Please accept this...

SLIDE

HERE IS YOUR CHOCO-LATE...

HUH?! RIGHT HERE?!

CAN I... HAVE A LOOK?

OR...I THINK AT LEAST, BUT...

I MEAN... I DIDN'T MESS UP OR ANYTHING!

SO...MIND TELLING ME WHAT'S GOING ON?

WONK

I MEAN...

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS LIKE CRAZY.

THANKS.

...GO AHEAD.

FWP

...

...IS THAT A NO?

OH!

Hey, relax!

NOW I GET HOW HE FELT BACK THEN...!

KCHAK

WELL, UM...

D-DON'T STARE AT THEM LIKE THAT!

CHOCOLATE MUFFINS!

I ORIGINALLY WANTED TO MAKE SOMETHING A BIT MORE ELABORATE...

I KNEW I COULDN'T CREATE SOMETHING ON THE LEVEL OF ALL THOSE AMAZING CAKES YOU'VE MADE...

THAT SAID, I STILL WANTED TO MAKE SOME-THING THAT'S AT LEAST SPECIAL IN ITS OWN RIGHT, BUT...

DO

SUCH DENSE AIR OF NEGATIVITY AROUND HER...

I KNOW IT'S PRESUMPTUOUS TO EVEN TRY AND COMPARE US. AND I KNOW IT'S NOT EASY TO MAKE SOMETHING GREAT, BUT I STILL... FEEL BAD...

AND IN THE END, I HAD TO GO WITH SOMETHING SIMPLE LIKE THIS...

THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT AS WELL AS I'D HOPED IT TO...

AND SHE'S RIGHT BACK TO NORMAL...

はっ

GLEAM

I THINK THEY TURNED OUT PRETTY CUTE!

AH! BUT INSTEAD, I WORKED REALLY HARD ON THE WRAPPING!

YUP...

SO THAT'S WHY YOU WERE LOOKING SO DEFEATED?

...

!

SHE PUT ALL HER HEART INTO IT.

...

...IS THIS TASTE THAT FILLS ME WITH HAPPINESS...

AND RESULTING FROM HER DEDICATION...

WAP

IT'S SUPER GOOD!

THANKS SO MUCH, KAORUKO-SAN!

!

うぉーー、

OF A DEAL?!

OH, THANK GOD...!

MHMM ?

WORKING ON THESE... I ONCE AGAIN REALIZED HOW AMAZING YOU ARE, RINTARO-KUN.

BUT WHILE BAKING SOMETHING MYSELF...

THE MOST I THOUGHT ABOUT THEM WAS HOW CUTE THEY LOOK OR HOW DELICIOUS THEY ARE.

WHEN IT COMES TO CAKES OR SWEETS IN GENERAL...

I REALIZED THAT IT'S JUST NOT SOMETHING FOR ME.

AND WITH ALL THAT FINE HANDI-WORK...

...YOU HAD TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT THE SMALLEST THINGS AT EVERY POSSIBLE MOMENT.

...I REALIZED THAT...

OH, YOU'RE EXAGGE-RATING...

IT GAVE ME NEWFOUND APPRECIATION FOR YOUR TALENT, RINTARO-KUN!

YET YOU'RE ABLE TO DO THAT EVERY SINGLE TIME...

I MEAN, I EVEN STRUG-GLED...

Hee hee...

...WITH SOMETHING RELATIVELY SIMPLE LIKE THAT.

...

...WITH SOMETHING RELATIVELY SIMPLE LIKE THAT.

Hee hee.

I MEAN, I EVEN STRUG-GLED...

STRUG-GLED, HUH?

...

See you soon!

...

I DIDN'T EXPECT HER TO SHOWER ME IN PRAISE LIKE THAT.

I GOTTA SAY...

"APPEAL-ING."

"DELI-CIOUS."

WHEN THE RESULT WASN'T SATISFYING ENOUGH.

AND THERE WERE COUNTLESS TIMES I FELT FRUSTRATED AT MYSELF...

MAKING IT LIKE THAT DEFINITELY TAKES A LOT OF WORK.

[illegible]

TO ME
THE PURSUIT
OF THE
PERFECTION...

BUT
SHE
SAID SHE
STRUGGLED
WITH IT.

[illegible]

STARTED.

NOT
NOW...

I DON'T
[illegible]

AL-RIGHT.

YOU CAN JUST PUT IT OVER THERE.

THANKS FOR THE HELP.

OH, TSUMU-GI!

I WONDER IF SOME-ONE'S MESSED UP WITH CARRYING NOTEBOOKS IN THE PAST...

!! FWIP

AND YOU'RE ALWAYS A SAFE BET.

Hmmm?

BECAUSE I HAPPENED TO SPOT YOU FIRST.

TURN

WHY DID YOU ASK ME TO HELP YOU ANY-WAY?

NAH, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

I'LL BE SURE TO PROPERLY ADD SOME-THING NEXT TIME.

AC-TUALLY... I WENT WITH "UN-DECIDED" MYSELF, SO...I'M SORRY.

AND YOU CAN ALWAYS MOVE ON TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTEAD OF LOOKING FOR A JOB.

BUT IT'S NOT LIKE YOU MUST HAVE SOMETHING READY BY TOMORROW.

IT'S BASICALLY JUST A FORMALITY TO HAVE YOU FILL IT OUT...

I just need some-thing at this point.

AND WHILE I'VE GOT YOU HERE, MIND TELLING USAMI TO FINALLY HAND IN HIS CAREER SURVEY?

HE WAS SUPPOSED TO A MONTH AGO, BUT... WELL, I'VE PRACTICALLY GIVEN UP AT THIS POINT.

WAIT... HE STILL HASN'T HANDED IT IN?

...

I STILL DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER.

SO, TSUKADA-SENSEI...?

YEAH?

HOW DO I...

...EVEN FIND SOMETHING I WANT TO DO IN THE FUTURE?

ARE YOU... FEELING UNSURE ABOUT SOMETHING?

HUH? AH...

WELL, I'M NOT SURE...

WHEN I THOUGHT OF TURNING SOMETHING I ENJOY DOING...

INTO MY ACTUAL JOB FOR THE FUTURE...

...IT JUST DIDN'T... REALLY CLICK WITH ME.

...

SO I'M JUST LOST ON WHAT TO DO AT THIS POINT.

BUT EVERY-ONE IN MY FAMILY HAS MADE THEIR HOBBY THEIR PROFESSION...

Tsuka-chan! I'd like to just redo my three years of high school, but what do you think?

Please graduate...

...

ぐすん SNIFFLE

Oo

I'M SO PROUD OF YOU, ACTUALLY THINKING ABOUT YOUR FUTURE LIKE THIS...

I WISH USAMI WOULD LEARN A THING OR TWO FROM YOU.

TSU-MUGI...

I MIGHT BE WORKING AS A TEACHER RIGHT NOW...

YOU SEE...

...

カチャ KTAK

IN FACT, WHEN I FIRST STARTED TEACHING, I WAS NOT HAPPY WHEN HEADING TO CLASS.

HEH

BUT IT WASN'T ALWAYS MY DREAM TO BECOME ONE, Y'KNOW?

HEY NOW, DON'T LET THAT RUIN YOUR IMAGE OF ME. I'M STILL A GOOD TEACHER, RIGHT?

Nothing's changed, I tell you. Ha ha ha!

ガラ ガラ CRACK CRACK ガラ CRACK CRACK

YOU ALWAYS SEEMED LIKE A GREAT TEACHER WHO HAD A BLAST WITH HIS JOB...

I FIND THAT... RATHER HARD TO BELIEVE.

WHA...

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A TEACHER?

BUT THEN...

WELL, TEACHING OTHERS...

DIDN'T FEEL LIKE A CHORE TO ME.

BUT OF COURSE, THAT DOESN'T MEAN I WAS SCORING TOP GRADES LEFT AND RIGHT OR ANYTHING.

MY PARENTS WERE RATHER PASSIONATE ABOUT GETTING ME A PROPER EDUCATION.

I THINK I STUDIED A WHOLE LOT WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE.

AND ONE DAY, THEY TOLD ME...

THEY'D OFTEN ASK ME FOR HELP IF THEY GOT STUCK WITH ANYTHING.

STILL, I AT LEAST WAS CLEVER ENOUGH TO TEACH THE GUYS AROUND ME.

...IT DIDN'T FEEL THAT WAY AT ALL.

BUT TO ME...

"THANKS FOR LOOK-ING AFTER US FOLKS."

"WE'RE PROBABLY A REAL PAIN, RIGHT?"

AND THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED.

---!

...WHEN TEACHING OTHERS INSTEAD.

...I SEEMED TO DO A LOT BETTER...

RATHER THAN SITTING AT MY DESK TO FACE EVERY-THING BY MY-SELF...

OF COURSE, I WASN'T CRAZY ABOUT TEACHING OTHERS, THOUGH.

IT COULD HARM THE ENJOYMENT YOU INITIALLY FELT TOWARD IT.

...BUT IF ANY PART OF IT STARTS TO FEEL LIKE A GRIND TO YOU...

YOU MAY TURN YOUR HOBBY OR INTERESTS INTO YOUR JOB...

...AND THINK ABOUT WHAT FITS YOU BEST, OR WHAT YOU'RE GOOD AT.

IT'S BEST TO CHANGE YOUR APPROACH...

SO, YOU DON'T HAVE TO FORCE YOURSELF TO THINK THAT WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IS WHAT YOU LIKE TO DO.

...BUT IF THERE'S A PART OF YOU THAT DOESN'T FEEL THAT WAY IN THE SLIGHTEST...

TO OTHER PEOPLE, IT MIGHT FEEL LIKE A CHORE, OR SOMETHING THEY STRUGGLE WITH...

...THEN THAT'S A VALUABLE ASSET TO HAVE.

THAT'S WHAT I THINK AT LEAST.

...SO DON'T TAKE IT FOR GOLD AND JUST KEEP IT IN MIND, YEAH?

THAT'S JUST MY OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE...

THEN AGAIN...

ANYWAY, THE BELL'S GONNA RING SOON.

BETTER GET BACK TO CLASS, YEAH?

CLENCH

...YES.

...WORKS, TOO.

SO THAT KIND OF APPROACH ...

I SEE...

I FEEL LIKE...

...CLEARED UP A BIT.

MY PER-SPEC-TIVE HAS...

Chapter 112: To the Mock Exam

ドサ PWUMP

OH YEAH, RINTARO?

Lunch break time!

CHATTER

CHATTER

HUH?

JUST BARELY MADE IT IN TIME FROM WHAT I SAW.

YOU GOT BACK TO THE CLASSROOM PRETTY LATE AFTER THE THIRD PERIOD, HUH?

WELL...

ガラッ RATTLE

Did I make it?

You're safe!

DID TSUKA-CHAN KEEP YOU BUSY OR SOMETHING?

...THEN THAT'S A VALUABLE ASSET TO HAVE.

THAT'S WHAT I THINK AT LEAST.

...AND THINK ABOUT WHAT FITS YOU BEST, OR WHAT YOU'RE GOOD AT

IT'S BEST TO CHANGE YOUR APPROACH.

SO. YOU DON'T HAVE TO FORCE YOURSELF TO THINK THAT WHAT YOU WANT TO DO IS WHAT YOU LIKE TO DO

...BUT IF THERE'S A PART OF YOU THAT DOESN'T FEEL THAT WAY IN THE SLIGHTEST...

TO OTHER PEOPLE, IT MIGHT FEEL LIKE A CHORE, OR SOMETHING THEY STRUGGLE WITH...

WE JUST...

...TALKED ABOUT SOME STUFF.

Yup, yup.

YOU'RE IN A PRETTY GOOD MOOD RIGHT NOW, AREN'T YOU?

YOU THINK SO?

OH...?

...!!!

GASP

NOW HOLD ON, YOU STILL HAVEN'T DONE THAT?!

THE DEADLINE WAS A WHOLE MONTH AGO...

SO, WHAT WERE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

ABOUT MY CAREER AND FUTURE...

RIGHT, NOW THAT YOU REMIND ME. USAMI, YOU STILL GOTTA HAND IN YOUR CAREER SURVEY.

BUT YOU CAN'T JUST NOT HAND IT IN, RIGHT?

True.

JUST WRITE DOWN SOMETHING SO YOU CAN CALL IT A DAY.

AHA!

WELL, THEY JUST WANNA SEE WHERE WE STAND AT THIS POINT IN TIME...

SO I DOUBT IT'S THAT BAD EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T HAND IT IN.

Now where did I keep it...

...

STRETCH のばし のばし STRETCH

くしゃ CRUMBLED あ!

FOUND IT!!

I WANTED TO GIVE IT SOME ACTUAL THOUGHT, BUT... I JUST STUFFED IT INTO MY DESK AND FORGOT ABOUT IT...

THEN YOU COULD'VE HANDED IT IN AGES AGO!

ERM... UN-DECID-ED...

SO? WHAT ARE YOU GONNA WRITE?

YOU'RE HELPLESS.

Hey! Hey!

ALL BACK TO NORMAL!

THAT REMINDS ME!

OOOH!

WAIT!

AND YOU BETTER APOLOGIZE LATER WHEN YOU HAND IT IN...

WIPE THAT SMUG GRIN OFF YOUR FACE.

SO I FIGURED I MIGHT AS WELL DO AS MUCH AS I CAN IN PREPARATION.

AT THE END OF THE MONTH, I'M GOING TO TAKE T-UNIVERSITY'S MOCK EXAM TOGETHER WITH HOSHINA-SAN.

...!

Way to change the topic

THIS WEEKEND.

SAKU! WHEN'S YOUR MOCK EXAM AGAIN?

H-HEY, YORITA?

!

THAT MAKES NO SENSE...

Thanks.

I'LL GIVE YOU SOME TAMAGOYAKI OF MINE, SO I EXPECT TOP RESULTS, YEAH?

HERE!

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW HAPPY THAT MAKES ME, SAKU! YOU'RE FINALLY FEELING MOTIVATED, EH?

...ARE GOING TO TAKE THE MOCK EXAM TOGETHER?

ぐぬぬ…

DO YOU KNOW WHY NATSUSAWA AND HOSHINA-SAN...

OH, ABOUT THAT...

DID YOU HEAR SOME-THING?

BUT COME TO THINK OF IT NOW, HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?

WHEN THAT WHOLE TALK OF THE MOCK EXAM CAME UP BEFORE...

I WAS DISTRACTED BY THE FACT THAT HE WAS TAKING THE MOCK EXAM FOR T-UNIVERSITY...

HOSHINA-SAN! YOU AND SAKU ARE GONNA TRY TO GET INTO T-UNIVERSITY, RIGHT?

NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT!

Ichige Park

YOU GOT MY FULL SUPPORT!

How many times do I gotta say it?

I TOLD YOU I STILL HAVEN'T DECIDED ON THAT.

THAT'S TOTALLY AMAZING!

IT'S SO FAMOUS THAT EVEN I KNOW ABOUT IT!

YEAH?

SAY, YUZUHARA-SAN...?

CHATTER

CHATTER

OOOH...

AND THAT'S WHEN NATSUSAWA-KUN SAID HE'S GONNA TAKE THE EXAM AS WELL.

SUBARU SAID THEY MET UP AND STUDIED TOGETHER TO HELP HER PREPARE FOR THE MOCK EXAM...

OH, ABOUT THAT...

WHAT HAPPENED FOR THEM TO HEAD TO THE MOCK EXAM TOGETHER?

OH, YEAH?

...

THE THING IS...

WHEN SAKU-KUN MENTIONED THAT THEY WOULD HEAD TO THE MOCK EXAM TOGETHER, I WAS ACTUALLY RATHER SURPRISED.

SO THAT'S WHAT WENT DOWN...

PARTIALLY, YEAH... BUT I WAS JUST LIKE, "THE TWO OF THEM??" YOU KNOW?

BECAUSE IT'S THE MOCK EXAM FOR T-UNIVERSITY?

IN WHAT WAY WERE YOU SURPRISED?

HUH? WHAT'S UP...?

ぽん

PAP

...

THANK GOD I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO KEPT THINKING THAT! I'M SO GLAD I CAN FINALLY TALK ABOUT IT WITH SOMEONE! YOU KNOW, THE THING IS—

BLA?

BLA?

BLA?

LIKE A FISH THAT WAS STARVED FOR WATER...

BLA?

SKREEEEE

?!

GRIP

IT'S REALLY WEIRD, RIGHT?!

SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED...
They even met up...
THEY'VE COME A LONG WAY...
COLOR ME SURPRISED... FOLKS FROM KIKYO CAN BE DUMB, AFTER ALL.
BY FOLKS FROM KIKYO...
ARE YOU ALSO REFERRING TO KAORUKO?
DID YOU ALREADY FORGET THE QUESTION WE ASKED YOU?
OH, PLEASE
NEED ME TO TEACH YOU THE ANSWER? GUESS YOU'RE NOT AS CLEVER AS I
RIGHT?
BUT THAT JUST MEANS...
WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I'D OFTEN GET BULLIED BY BOYS BECAUSE OF MY HAIR.
ALL I COULD DO WAS CRY TO MYSELF
BUT THE THING IS...
...I'VE ALWAYS
...HAD TROUBLE DEALING WITH MEN.
...HOSHINA-SAN'S OPENED UP SO MUCH...
THAT SHE FEELS COMFORTABLE ENOUGH TO GO SOMEWHERE AS JUST THE TWO OF THEM.
YOU LOOK HAPPY.
...MAYBE I AM.
HEH, THAT'S SO LIKE YOU, RINTARO.

I ALREADY TOLD THE TEACHERS, SO THEY'LL LET ME LEAVE EARLY.

YUP. IT'S ON THE SAME DAY AS THEIR SECONDARY EXAMINATIONS, SO A WEEKDAY OR NOT DOESN'T MATTER.

WAIT A SECOND... THE 25TH IS A FRIDAY, RIGHT?

YEAH, THE 25TH AND 26TH.

OH, SO THEY'RE HELD OVER TWO DAYS?

!

...STILL WEARING YOUR UNIFORMS?

WHICH MEANS YOU'RE HEADING THERE TOGETHER...

YEAH, THAT'S NOT GONNA WORK.

OUT OF THE QUESTION.

...

I FIGURED AS MUCH...

IT'S FUNNY, KAORUKO AND MADOKA SAID THE SAME THING TO ME TODAY.

AND GOING TO THE EXAM IN OUR SCHOOL UNIFORM DOES SOUND A BIT SCARY.

ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING WHERE YOU'RE HEADING...

EVEN IF YOU CAN LEAVE CLASS EARLY, YOU WON'T HAVE TIME TO CHANGE OUT OF YOUR UNIFORM, RIGHT?

I'M SORRY, I INVITED YOU TO COME ALONG WITHOUT EVEN CHECKING THE DAY THE MOCK EXAM IS HELD...

YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE FOR THAT.

I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT IT, EITHER.

BUT THEY ARE APPARENTLY HEADING TO A DIFFERENT VENUE.

THERE ARE A FEW OTHERS WHO PLAN ON TAKING THE MOCK EXAM...

WHICH MEANS... WE GOTTA STAY VIGILANT.

MAYBE WE SHOULD GIVE UP ON HEADING THERE TOGETHER ON THE 25TH...

YEAH, GOOD CALL.

NO HESITATION AS ALWAYS...

Oh, Madoka-chan!

Hey, you were thinking of going to T-University, right?

Are you taking the same-day mock exam? Where is it being held?

Over at XX!

Oh, really? Thanks! Good luck, I'm cheering for you!

THOUGH, SINCE I DON'T KNOW THEM PERSONALLY, MADOKA WENT AHEAD AND ASKED FOR ME.

...

BUT FOR SOME REA-SON...

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE HAD TROUBLE BECAUSE OF OUR SCHOOLS.

HONESTLY...

WE TALKED ON THE PHONE BECAUSE I FIGURED IT'D BE EASIER FOR HER...

BUT THIS SHORT CONVER-SATION, WE MAY AS WELL HAVE DONE OVER CHAT INSTEAD...

I don't know...

Yeah, right

Any-way, good night.

NATSU-SAWA!

IT FEELS MUCH MORE FRUS-TRATING... THAN IT EVER DID BEFORE.

*The "Katsu" in Tonkatsu (eng. pork cutlet) means "Victory," so a lot of people eat it before important events such as school exams.

YOU GUYS REMEMBER THAT I'M JUST TAKING THE MOCK EXAMS, RIGHT?

YOU'LL BE THE FIRST GUY FROM CHIDORI TO MAKE IT INTO T-UNIVERSITY! MAKE US PROUD!

DID YOU MAKE SURE TO EAT YOUR TONKATSU* YESTER-DAY?!

I'M SURE YOU'LL BE ACCEPTED!

GO GET 'EM, SAKU-KUN!

SNACKS, TOO?

YOU GOT YOUR ADMISSION TICKET ON YOU?

THEY SURE ARE GETTING CARRIED AWAY...

ARE YOU MY MOM OR SOME-THING?

Snacks? Really?

WHAT ABOUT A HANDKER-CHIEF AND TISSUES?

ひょこ

PEEK

OH, FOR REAL?

Because it lies heavily on the stomach!

I HEARD THAT TONKATSU ACTUALLY ISN'T ALL THAT GREAT THE DAY BEFORE AN EXAM!

WE RARELY GET TO SEND PEOPLE OFF TO MOCK EXAMS LIKE THIS, AFTER ALL!

HONESTLY, THIS IS PRETTY EXCITING!

OKAAAY!

HEY, HEY, HEY! DON'T KEEP NATSUSAWA ON LOCKDOWN HERE!

SIXTH PERIOD IS ABOUT TO START, SO HEAD BACK TO YOUR CLASSROOM!

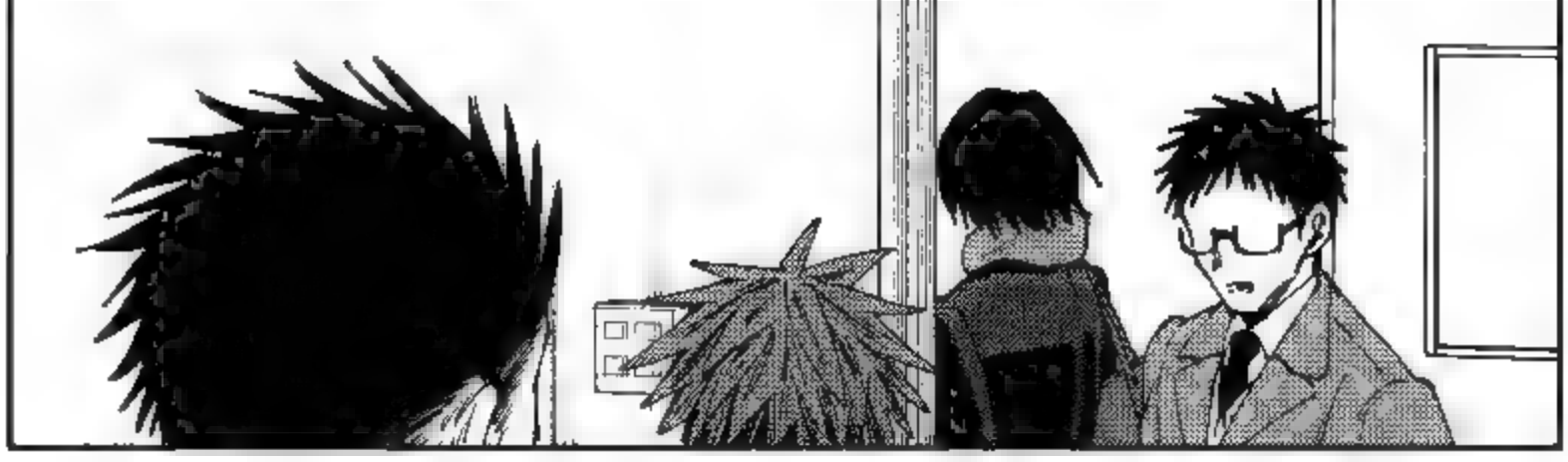
BEST OF LUCK TO YOU, THEN!

WELL SAID!

I'M PERFECTLY FINE, THOUGH.

YEAH.

AS FOR YOU, JUST RELAX AND GIVE IT YOUR BEST, YEAH?

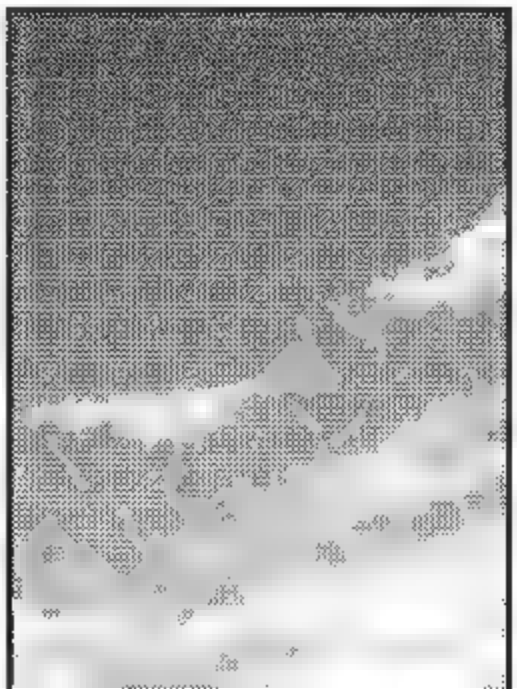


CLEARED UP A BIT.
MY PERSPECTIVE HAS
WORKS, TOO
SO THAT KIND OF APPROACH
I SEE.
I FEEL LIKE

...

...I ALSO MOVE FORWARD MYSELF.
I GOTTA MAKE SURE...

...!



...IT'D MAKE SENSE WE USE THE SAME TRAIN TO GET THERE.

WELL, WITH OUR SCHOOLS RIGHT NEXT TO EACH OTHER...

SHE LOOKS A BIT TENSE. AND SHE HASN'T EVEN SPOTTED ME YET.

THAT SAID...

IT'S HOSHINA-SAN...

A MESSAGE FROM NATSU-SAWA-KUN?

PLING

...!

...

BUT WHY...?

CUTE...

...!

TAK TAK TAK

I DIDN'T EVEN SPOT HIM UNTIL NOW...

For you.

You looked tense, so have some healing.

SHUP

SHUP

SHUP

HEHE

It helped me relax a bit,
so thank you.

Seems like we're still gonna head there together, huh?

Although we can't talk with each other.

I mean, we are talking right now.

Not directly.

Sure, but...
It's not all that different, right?

That's true.

That's true.

But I feel a lot better now after seeing you.

...!

SHUP

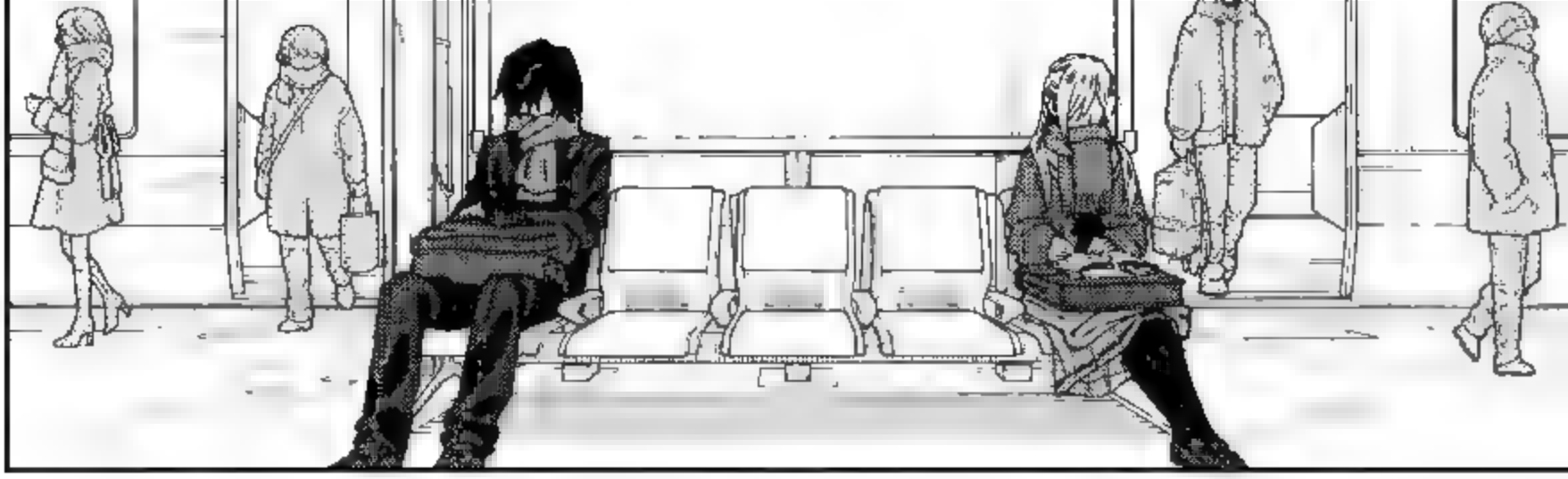
Sorry to interrupt you while you were studying. Let's rock the mock exams.

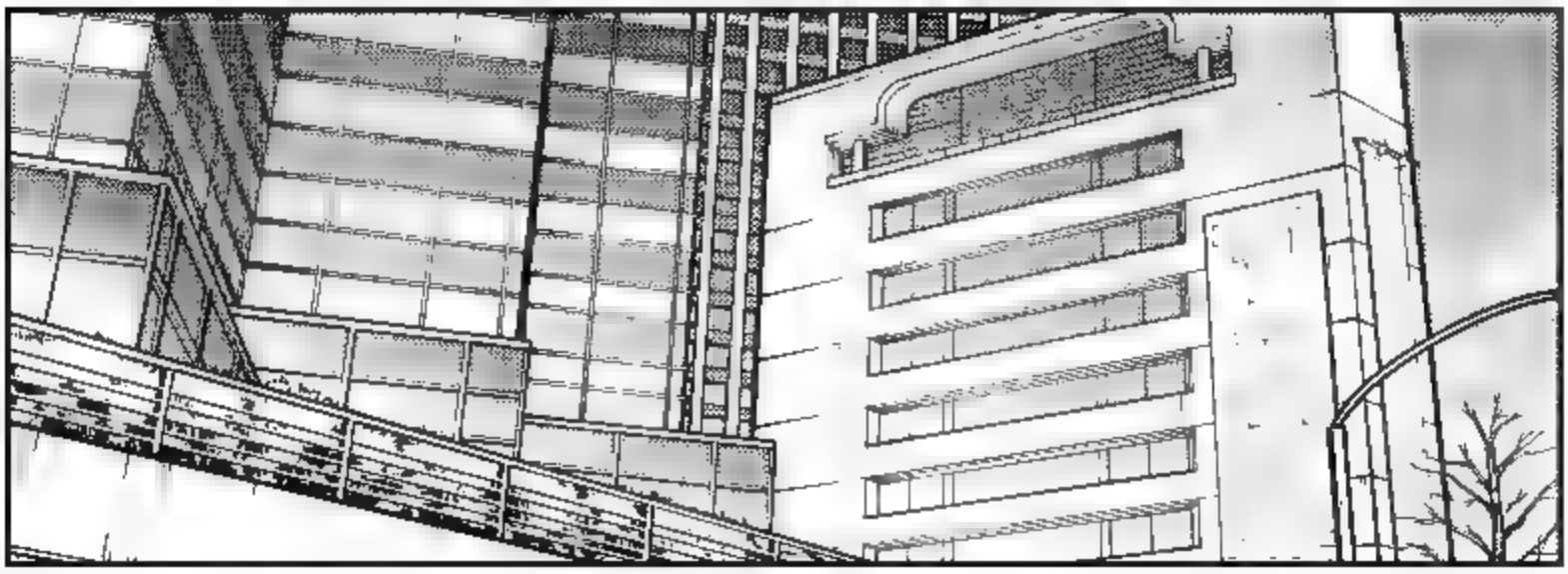
Of course.

HERE SHE GOES AGAIN WITH THAT...

GLANCE

SQUEEZ





ISN'T THAT KIKYO GIRLS' UNIFORM?
So cute!
YOU THINK SHE DYED HER HAIR SILVER?
NO IDEA. MAYBE THEIR SCHOOL REGULATIONS AREN'T ALL THAT STRICT AFTER ALL?
...

HEY, LOOK AT THAT GIRL OVER THERE...
ARE ALL THE FOLKS HERE GOING TO THE EXAMS?

SEEMS LIKE NOT WALKING THERE TOGETHER WAS THE RIGHT CHOICE.

She sure stands out, eh?

...!

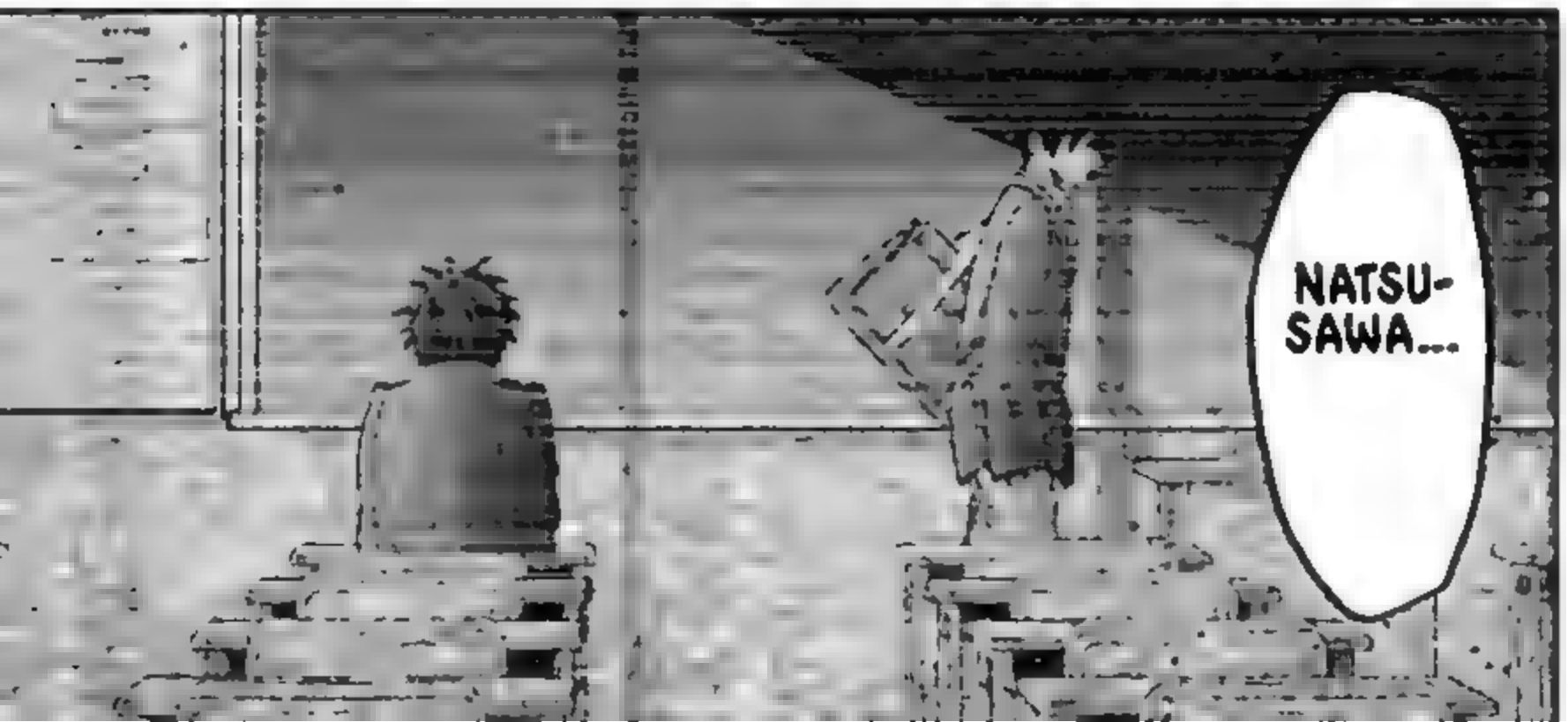
スス…

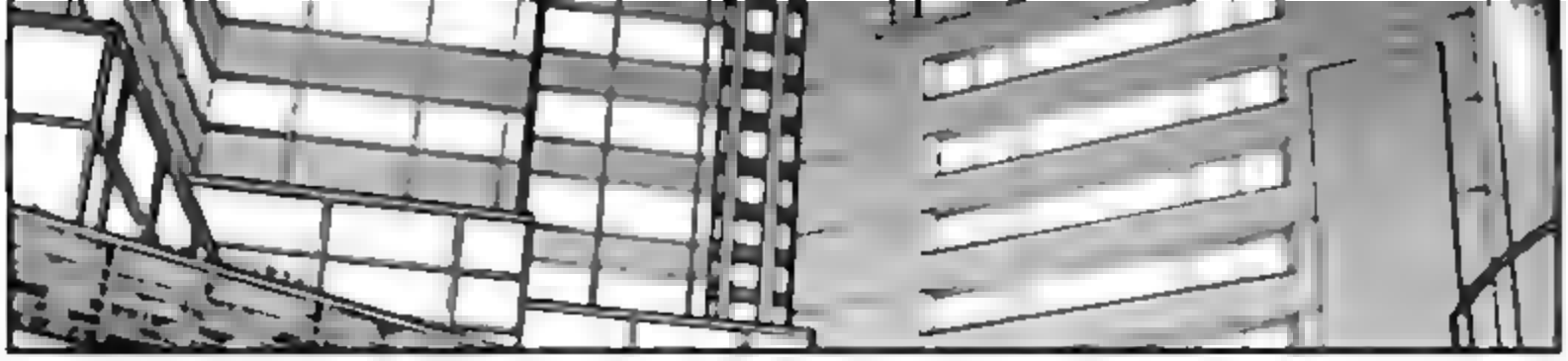
TAT

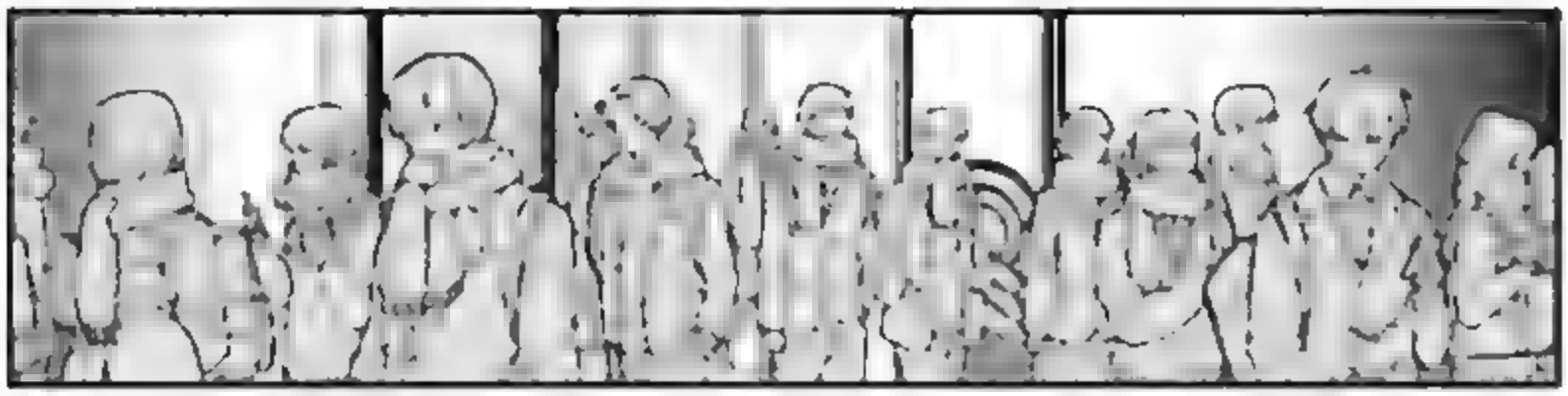
MAYBE I SHOULD KEEP MORE OF A DISTANCE JUST TO BE SURE...

HIDAKA
...?

...!


NATSU-
SAWA...





HOW DID...
NATSU-SAWA-KUN DO TODAY?

I SHOULD CHECK MY ANSWERS ONCE I GET BACK HOME...
I'm a bit uncertain about a few things.
BUT, I WON-DER...

JUST WHEN I WAS THINKING ABOUT HIM.

...!
ISN'T THAT..

KNOWING HIM, HE PROBABLY WORKED HIS WAY THROUGH THE EXAM LIKE IT WAS ANY OTHER.

Chapter 113: Scars of the Heart

HIDAKA...?

I COULDN'T KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT.

OUT OF SUR-PRISE...

NATSU-SAWA...

...!

BADUMP

...

...

AH...

GOSH, I HOPE I STUDIED ENOUGH...

RIGHT?

TWITCH

!

...

...

Let's do our best, yeah?

TURN

...SEE YOU.

ALL CAME BACK GUSHING INTO MY HEAD LIKE A TIDAL WAVE

THOSE PAINFUL MEMORIES FROM BACK THEN

SO IN THE END

THE SAME AS THEM

OH

YOU WERE

...OF US NORMAL PEOPLE. ISN'T THAT RIGHT?!

SOMEONE WHO'S A SPECIAL YOU...

COULD NEVER HOPE TO UNDERSTAND THE FEELINGS...

...YOU JUST GOTTA WORK HARDER, RIGHT?

YOU LOVE STUDYING, AFTER ALL.

ALTHOUGH I DON'T GET WHY YOU WOULD.

I SHOULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO HURT HIM ANY MORE THAN THIS.

SOMEONE LIKE ME

WITH MY VERY OWN EYES.

EVERY MOMENT

I'VE SEEN HIM PUT IN SO MUCH EFFORT.

THAT'S WHY HE'S HERE AT UR PUBLIC SCHOOL.

BUT...

HE FLUNKED HIS MIDDLE SCHOOL ENTRANCE EXAMS.

I CAN'T... FOCUS AT ALL...!

GRIP

...

...OF US NORMAL PEOPLE. ISN'T THAT RIGHT?!

COULD NEVER HOPE TO UNDERSTAND THE FEELINGS...

WHO'S A SPECIAL YOU...

HIS FACE...

...WHEN HE SAID THAT TO ME BACK THEN...

I CAN'T FORGET ABOUT IT, NO MATTER WHAT.

I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED...

NO DOUBT...

HE MUST BE STUDYING LIKE CRAZY EVEN NOW.

Subaru Hoshina
Incoming

IT'S HOSHINA-SAN...

...!

BZZT

BZZT

...SOME-ONE'S CALLING ME?

TAP

BZZT

BZZT

...

I WAS FEELING RATHER STARVED AFTER USING MY HEAD FOR THE PAST FEW HOURS...

SO I WAS THINKING WE COULD STOP BY A NEARBY CAFÉ FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

OH... WELL, I MEAN, WE'RE STILL WEARING OUR UNIFORMS, RIGHT?

HELLO. DO YOU HAVE... TIME RIGHT NOW?

...HUH?

...HELLO?

LOOK BEHIND YOU.

HOW DID YOU KNOW... THAT I'M WEARING A COAT?

HM? HOLD ON...

I DON'T KNOW, TODAY IS JUST...

WE ARE BOTH WEARING COATS ABOVE OUR UNIFORMS, AND THERE AREN'T AS MANY PEOPLE AROUND AND ABOUT AS EARLIER TODAY, NO?

I HAPPENED TO SPOT YOU...
WALKING A BIT FURTHER AHEAD OF ME

...!
YOU SEEMED AS IF... YOU WERE IN PAIN, SO...

...YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR EXAM RESULTS, YES?

IF I HAD TO GUESS...

IF THERE'S SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND...

...WOULD TELLING ME ABOUT IT HELP?

time. COFFEE and SWEETS

YOU RAN INTO YOUR FRIEND THAT YOU TOLD US ABOUT WHEN WE MET UP WITH AYU AND THE GIRLS...

RIGHT BEFORE THE EXAM, TOO.

...I SEE.

I DON'T HAVE THE RIGHT ...

...TO CALL HIM THAT ANYMORE.

AND HIS NAME IS HIDAKA-KUN, YES?

...HE'S NOT MY FRIEND.

I AL-WAYS ...

ALWAYS WANTED TO APOLOGIZE FOR WHAT I SAID.

YOU LOVE STUDYING, AFTER ALL.

ALTHOUGH I DON'T GET WHY YOU WOULD.

...YOU JUST GOTTA WORK HARDER, RIGHT?

MY MOUTH...

...WOULDN'T MOVE.

YET, WHEN I RAN INTO HIM...

...TODAY AND HERE OF ALL THE PLACES...

I JUST...

YOU KNOW...

...FELT SO DAMN LAME.

I HAD ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD AND COUNTLESS CHANCES...

...TO ACTUALLY GO UP TO HIM AND APOLOGIZE.

...

THINKING BACK ON IT...

BUT I DIDN'T DO THAT.

AND WE GRADUATED, I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.

I GUESS ...

A PART OF ME WAS JUST RELIEVED.

IF WE LIVED OUR LIVES APART LIKE THAT...

THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE TO KEEP THINKING ABOUT IT.

BUT I WANTED TO GIVE IT ANOTHER TRY...

IF WE EVER MET AGAIN.

I INTENDED TO BE SINCERE AND APOLOGIZE...

...BUT AS EXPECTED, I COMPLETELY DROPPED THE BALL.

I...

...HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL SINCE THEN.

I'M... SO LAME...

MUMBLE

...
SORRY TO UNLOAD ALL THIS ONTO YOU OUT OF NOWHERE...
...!
TAP
TAP
WHAT ...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WELL, SHE PROBABLY GOT TIRED OF LISTENING TO ME LAMENTING IN SELF-PITY...
ACTUALLY, THERE'S THIS CUTE STICKER THAT MADOKA RECOMMENDED ME A WHILE AGO.
...WAIT, WHAT?
IT EVEN MOVES. I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES.
OH... WELL, I GUESS SOME DO...
NOT TO BE THAT GUY, BUT SHE SOUNDS LIKE AN OLD LADY WHO IS JUST LEARNING ABOUT MESSAGING APPS.
PLING
!
SHUP
SHUP
Paw Punch
SHE SENT IT...TO ME...?
...

むす…

TO BE HONEST, I DON'T KNOW THE LAST THING ABOUT THAT HIDAKA-KUN...

SO I CAN'T PRETEND I KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON OR SAY ANYTHING IRRESPON-SIBLE...

...

BUT EVEN SO...

I BELIEVE I'VE GOTTEN TO KNOW YOU QUITE WELL AT THIS POINT...

...AND YOU AREN'T NEARLY AS LAME AS YOU BELIEVE YOURSELF TO BE.

I WAS IMPRESSED WHEN YOU DID SO.

WHEN YOU APOLOGIZED TO ME ON YOUR BIRTHDAY?

REMEMBER LAST SUMMER?

BUT YOU DIDN'T. YOU SHOWED ME THAT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF MAKING AMENDS FOR YOUR MISTAKES AND IMPROVING UPON THOSE.

AND YOU COULD'VE JUST KEPT IT SWEPT UNDER A RUG AND FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT, TOO.

I HAD LONG FORGOTTEN ABOUT OUR... TROUBLESOME FIRST MEETING.

...!

YOU MADE IT CLEAR THAT YOU ARE A BRAVE PERSON.

I'M SORRY, BUT...

I CAN'T ACCEPT THAT.

PRETENDING THAT IT DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING...

BUT NOW, HEARING YOU DENY THAT...

NATURALLY, I HAVEN'T KNOWN YOU FOR THAT LONG...

BUT I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED.

...

...WHAT ABOUT ME?

BECAUSE IF SO...

...OR WHEN WE CAME TO VISIT YOU...

...WHY I SAID IT.

THAT NOT.

I'M SORRY.

I THOUGHT OF YOU AS A FRIEND ALREADY!

BE IT AT THE BEACH ...

...ALLOWING ME TO MOVE FORWARD AND GROW AS A PERSON.

YOU WERE ALWAYS HONEST AND UPFRONT WITH ME...

YOU HELPED ME...

UNDER-STAND MORE ABOUT MYSELF.

...THAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING ALL THIS TIME.

SO, PLEASE...

DON'T ERASE THE NATSU-SAWA-KUN...

...THAT I'M SURE YOU ARE NOT THE TYPE OF PERSON WHO ALWAYS REMAINS STUCK AT THE SAME PLACE.

AND IT'S BECAUSE OF WHAT I'VE SEEN...

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO RIGHT NOW?

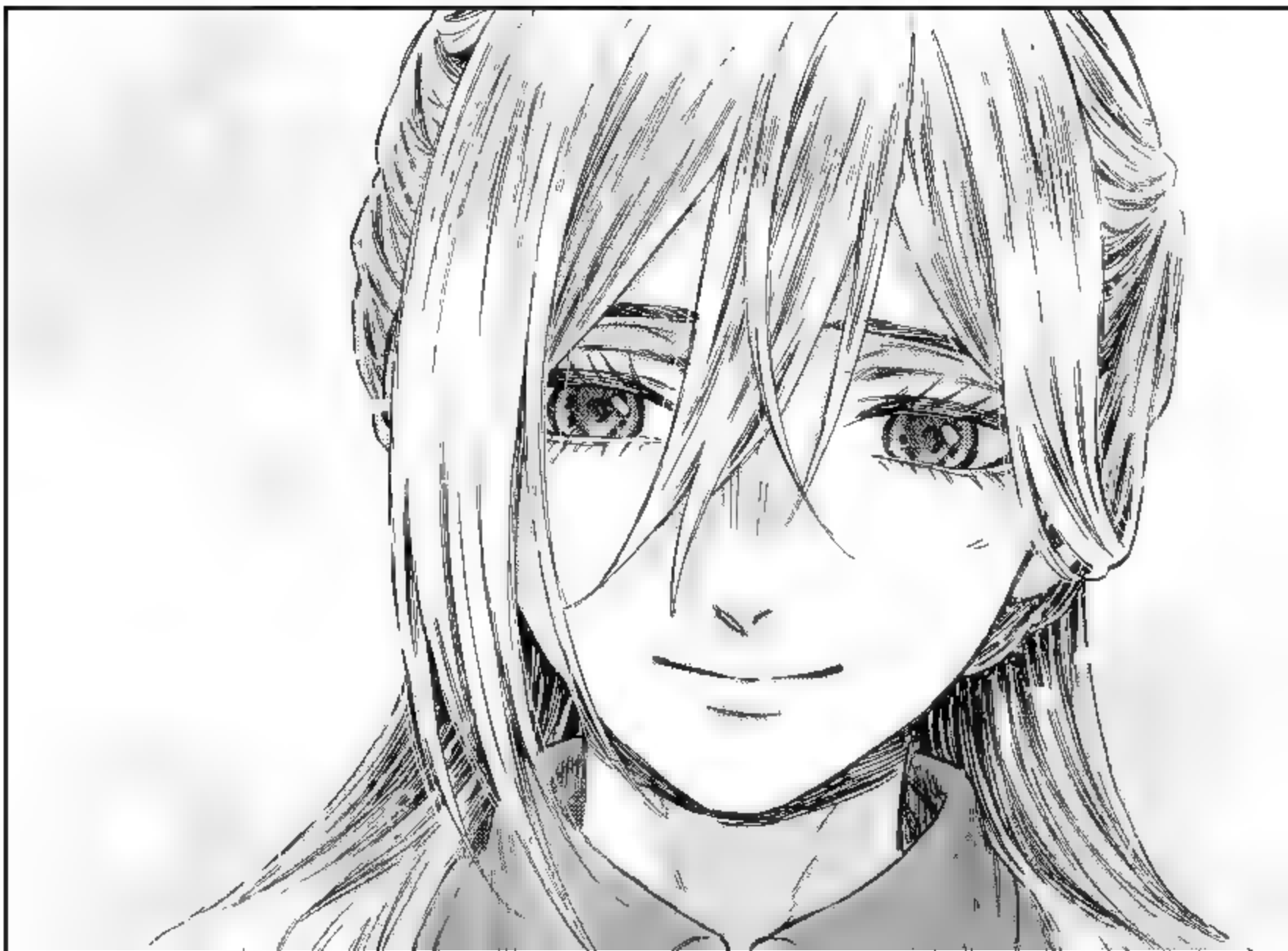
SO, WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?

I WANT TO PROPER-LY...

...APOLO-GIZE TO HIDAKA.

THEN I SEE NO REASON TO WORRY.

...I SEE.



I'M SURE...

...YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DO IT.

SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE

I BET YOU'VE GOT A LOT TO TALK ABOUT WITH HIDAKA-KUN.

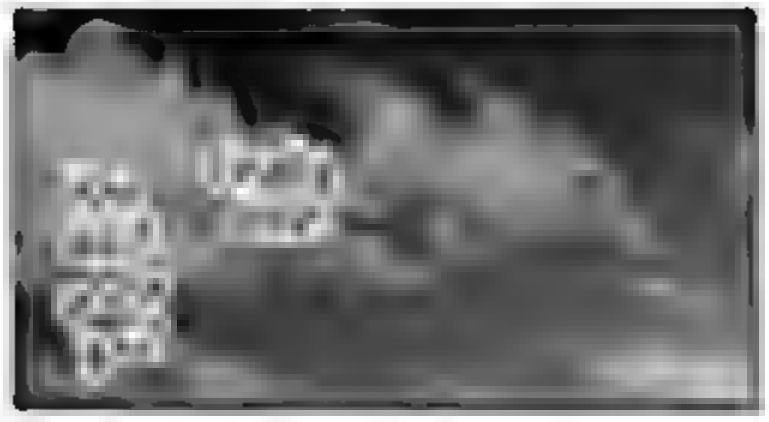
DON'T WORRY ABOUT WAITING FOR ME TOMORROW.

ROGER.

LET US BOTH GIVE IT OUR ALL, YEAH?

GREAT. THEN...

ALL RIGHT, GOT IT.



AND, THANKS.

I WONDER...

THAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING ALL THIS TIME

DON'T ERASE THE NATSUSAWA-RUN...

SO, PLEASE...

UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT MYSELF.

YOU HELPED ME.

ALLOWING ME TO MOVE FORWARD AND GROW AS A PERSON.

YOU WERE ALWAYS HONEST AND UPFRONT WITH ME.

...

...

GLOOM

I KNOW THAT I'VE SOFTENED UP TOWARD THEM COMPARED TO BEFORE, BUT STILL...

MAYBE I WAS A BIT TOO HARD ON HIM?

HM, KAORUKO?

IS THIS HOW YOU FELT...

BACK THEN WHEN YOU LECTURED ME?

THAT WOULD MAKE ME VERY HAPPY.

BECAUSE IF SO...

...NATSU-SAWA-KUN.

GOOD LUCK...

I'M SURE...

...YOU'LL DO JUST FINE.

THAT SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAD A BLAST.

Ha ha!

YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN AYU'S REACTION!

YUP! THE EXAMS ARE SUPPOSED TO GO FOR TWO DAYS!

NATSUSAWA AND HOSHINA-SAN GOT ANOTHER MOCK EXAM TODAY, RIGHT?

...OH, RIGHT.

WHAT'S UP?

YOU KNOW, WHEN I HEARD THAT SUBARU AND NATSU-SAWA-KUN WERE HEADING THERE TOGETHER...

I WAS INCREDIBLY HAPPY!

I COULD TELL SHE MUST HAVE OPENED UP TO HIM QUITE A LOT.

THOUGH, I AGREE WITH BEING HAPPY.

HONESTLY, WE DIDN'T DO ANY-THING...

So, thanks!

AND IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU GUYS!

TRUE. I SHOULD TEXT NATSU-SAWA LATER, MYSELF.

OH YEAH, SPEAKING OF...

I THINK THE EXAM SHOULD BE OVER RIGHT ABOUT NOW, SO I SHOULD CHECK UP ON SUBARU AFTER THIS.

Asking how it went and all.

...CRAP.

...AND SINCE WE TOOK THE EXAM IN DIFFERENT CLASSROOMS, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE HE COULD BE.

SIGH

I WAS LOOKING FOR HIM ALL OVER CAMPUS, BUT HE WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND...

...ASKED FOR HIS NUMBER YESTERDAY.

I SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST...

...THAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING ALL THIS TIME.

SO, PLEASE...

DON'T ERASE THE NATSU-SAWA-KUN...

IS WORTH OF ATTRACTION

THE STRENGTH ALONE

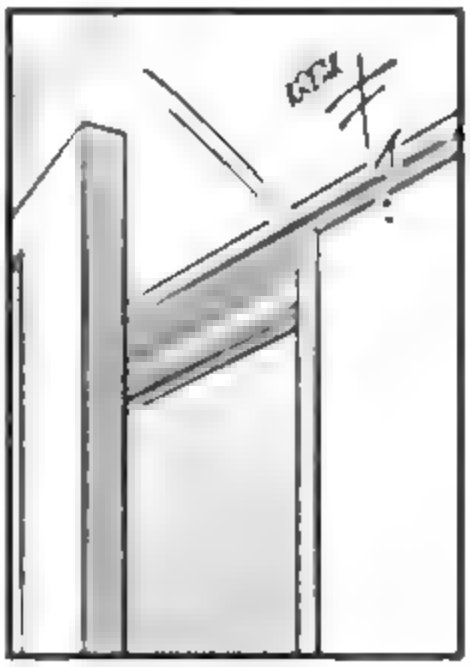
SOMEONE WHO CAN ALWAYS [illegible] TOWARD BECOMING BETTER.

SHE IS.

BUT I'M NOT SURE IF HE'S REALLY THERE...
I COULD THINK OF ONE PLACE WHERE I'D LIKELY FIND HIM...
HI
TWAP ?

...!!

!
OH, MY BAD. I'LL BE OUT RIGHT AWAY—


KYU

...TOLD YOU'D BE HERE, SO I CAME BACK...

I WAS...

WHY ARE YOU...

HIDAKA ...?

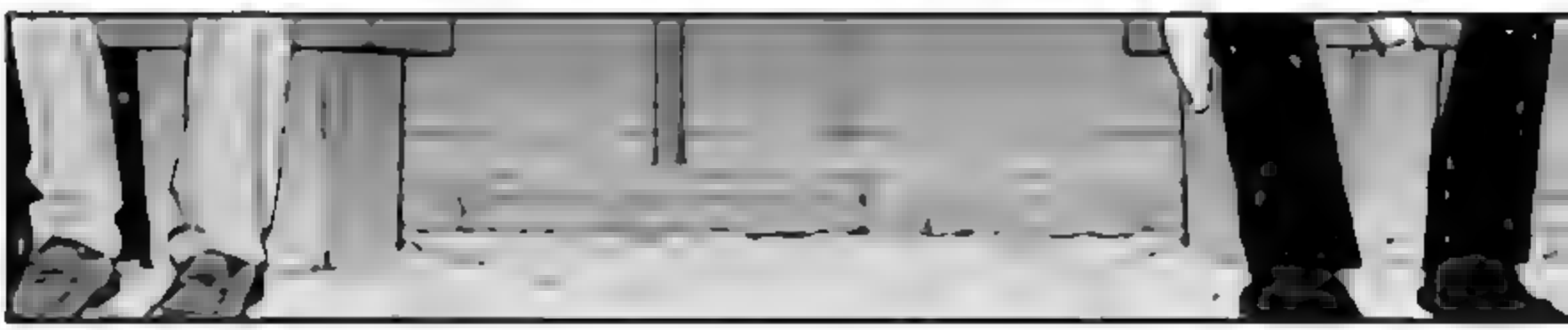
...

...

SILENCE

TOLD? BY WHOM?

Chapter 114: Natsusawa and Hidaka



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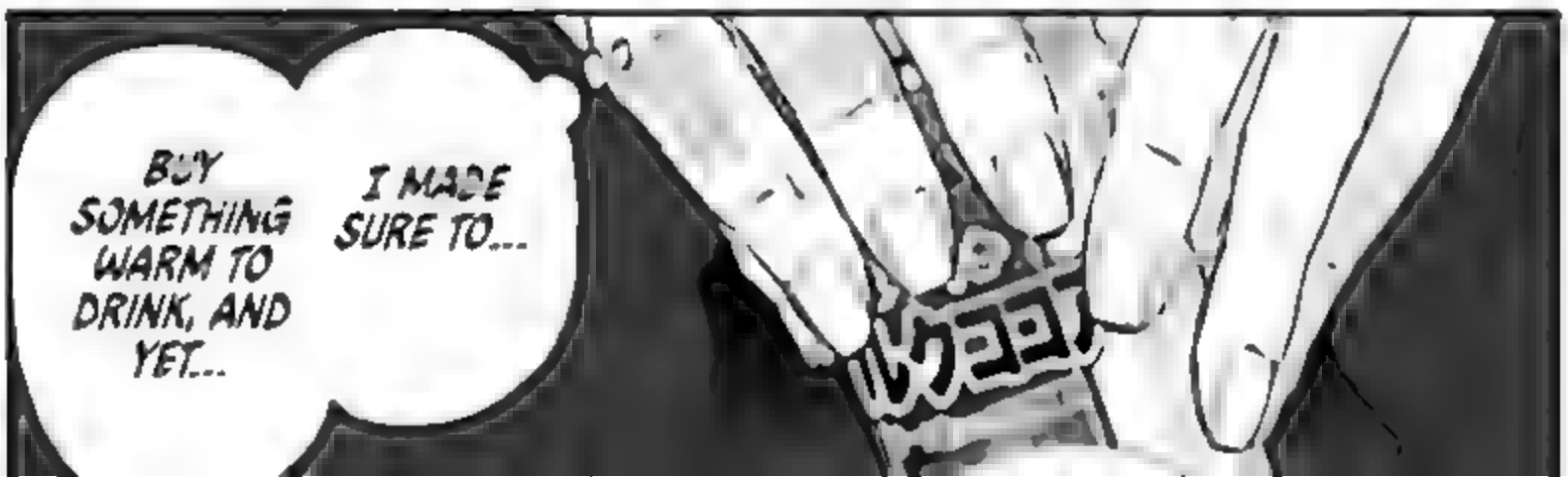

I MADE SURE TO...
BUY SOMETHING WARM TO DRINK, AND YET...

...FEEL AS COLD AS ICE...

MY FINGER-TIPS...

...

NATURALLY, I HAVEN'T KNOWN YOU FOR THAT LONG...

BUT I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED.

YOU WERE ALWAYS HONEST AND UPFRONT WITH ME...

...ALLOWING ME TO MOVE FORWARD AND GROW AS A PERSON.

SO, PLEASE...

DON'T ERASE THE NATSU-SAWA-KUN...

THAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING ALL THIS TIME.

I'M SORRY.

I'M SORRY.

HIDAKA.

...!

I'M SORRY.

SO INCON-SIDERATE AND SELFISH.

FOR SAYING SOME-THING...

...YOU JUST GOTTA WORK HARDER, RIGHT?

I'M SORRY.

FOR EVERY-THING.

AS WELL AS TAKING THIS LONG...

TO APOLOGIZE TO YOU.

...

...MY MIND HAS BEEN CHEWING ON THESE MEMORIES OF THAT DAY EVERY SINGLE MINUTE.

EVER SINCE I RAN INTO HIM YESTER-DAY...

...THE TIME WE SPENT IN THE LIBRARY ROOM, SURROUNDED BY THE SOUND OF CICADAS CHIRPING.

BUT..

THEN I SUDDENLY REMEM-BERED..

IF ONLY...

I'D AGREED TO HIS REQUEST BACK THEN.

Can't you just teach me already!

Hell no

IF I'D BEEN ABLE TO SAY YES...

AND NOT DRAWN THE LINE BETWEEN US THAT I ALWAYS CRITICIZED OTHERS FOR...

THEN MAYBE...

HE WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TO MAKE THAT FACE.

I'M SORRY.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO APO- ANYTHING, NATSUSAWA.

YOU WERE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. I JUST DIDN'T TRY

I THINK I WAS THE ONE WHO ACTED IN A HORRIBLE WAY.

IN FACT...

...WHAT?

!

WELL, I ACTUALLY DID.

WHY BACK WHEN I WAS A YOUNG KID.

DO YOU STILL REMEMBER WHEN YOU TOLD ME THAT?

WH-WHAT'S WRONG?

!

YOU LOVE STUDYING. AFTER ALL."

BECAUSE THE HARDER I STUDIED...

IT FELT GOOD...

AND FUN, EVEN.

...THE BETTER I COULD SEE HOW MUCH I'D IMPROVED.

...IT BECAME AN OBLIGATION SO THAT I WOULDN'T BETRAY THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE PEOPLE AROUND ME.

BUT EVENTUALLY...

...

WHEN WE WERE IN THAT LIBRARY ROOM...

...AS I WORKED THROUGH MY WORKBOOK WITH YOU SITTING ACROSS THE TABLE...

...?

SO...

I HADN'T GOTTEN THAT FEELING IN A LONG TIME.

...HAD FUN STUDYING AGAIN.

I GENU-INELY...

THE REASON I FIRST APPROACHED YOU...

CAN'T SAY I REMEMBER YOU, BUT...

BUT THEN...

SO THAT I COULD SATISFY MY MOTHER AND HER EXPECTATIONS.

...WAS RIGHT AROUND THE TIME I HAD TO GET FIRST PLACE IN THE NEXT EXAMS...

WHO ARE YOU AGAIN?

ERM.

LET'S HAVE A MATCH AT THE NEXT MID-TERM EXAMS!

YOU AND I, NATSUSAWA!

YOU ACTED LIKE YOUR RESULTS WERE OF NO INTEREST OR CONCERN TO YOU.

THAT SOUND GOOD WITH YOU?

IF YOU'RE THAT DESPERATE TO GET THAT FIRST PLACE, I'LL TURN IN AN EMPTY ANSWER SHEET FOR THE NEXT EXAMS.

AFTER ALL, YOU'D BEEN SCORING THE TOP SCORE IN EVERY EXAM SO FAR...

SO I FIGURED YOU MUST FEEL SOME SORT OF PRIDE AND SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT TOWARD YOUR OWN TALENT AND EFFORT.

IT WAS UNEXPECTED... AND GENUINELY SURPRISED ME.

THING IS...

I FLUNKED MY MIDDLE SCHOOL ENTRANCE EXAMS.

...

NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY...

IT'S STILL NOT ENOUGH.

THIS FEELING OF DISAP-POINTMENT AND DEFEAT...

...PROBABLY WILL NEVER EXPERIENCE IT.

A *GENIUS* LIKE YOU...

YOU SEE... NOT MEETING OTHER PEOPLE'S EXPECTA-TIONS...

JUST THE THOUGHT DEEPLY TERRIFIED ME.

...!

...UNTIL I COULDN'T STOP ANYMORE, NOT EVEN TO TAKE A BREATHER.

BUT I CONTINUED TO WORK AS HARD AS POSSIBLE...

...GASPING FOR A BIT OF FRESH AIR.

I'D SPEND MY DAYS...

...I COULD TRULY BE AT PEACE WITH MYSELF.

BUT, ONLY WHEN I WAS WITH YOU...

SOME-ONE WHO COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT RESULTS AND SCORES...

NOT ONLY THAT...

...

...

THAT YOU SAW ALL OF THAT AS NOTHING BUT AN EYESORE, TOO.

I QUICKLY REAL-IZED...

HOW OUR CLASSMATES FELT ABOUT YOU.

AS WELL AS...

BUT I KNEW WHAT EXPECTATIONS OUR TEACHERS HAD FOR YOU.

...YOU DIDN'T SEEM BOTHERED BY IT IN THE SLIGHTEST.

AND YET...

TO FOLLOW AND BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU CONSIDER NORMAL.

YOU SIMPLY KEPT ON GOING YOUR WAY.

NO MATTER THE IMPRESSION YOU LEFT ON PEOPLE AND THE IMAGE THEY HAD OF YOU...

...

WASN'T EVEN ANY REASON FOR CONCERN IN YOUR EYES.

THE LINE BETWEEN YOU AND THE OTHERS...

AND...

I THOUGHT YOU WERE REALLY COOL LIKE THAT.

I WANTED TO...

...BECOME MORE LIKE YOU.

HAVING FOUND THIS GOAL...

...ONLY WHEN WE WERE SPENDING TIME TOGE-THER...

...I FELT LIKE I RETURNED TO MY YOUNGER SELF.

I WAS ABLE TO STUDY...

...ONLY FOR MYSELF AND FOR MY OWN SAKE.

I...

AND YET...

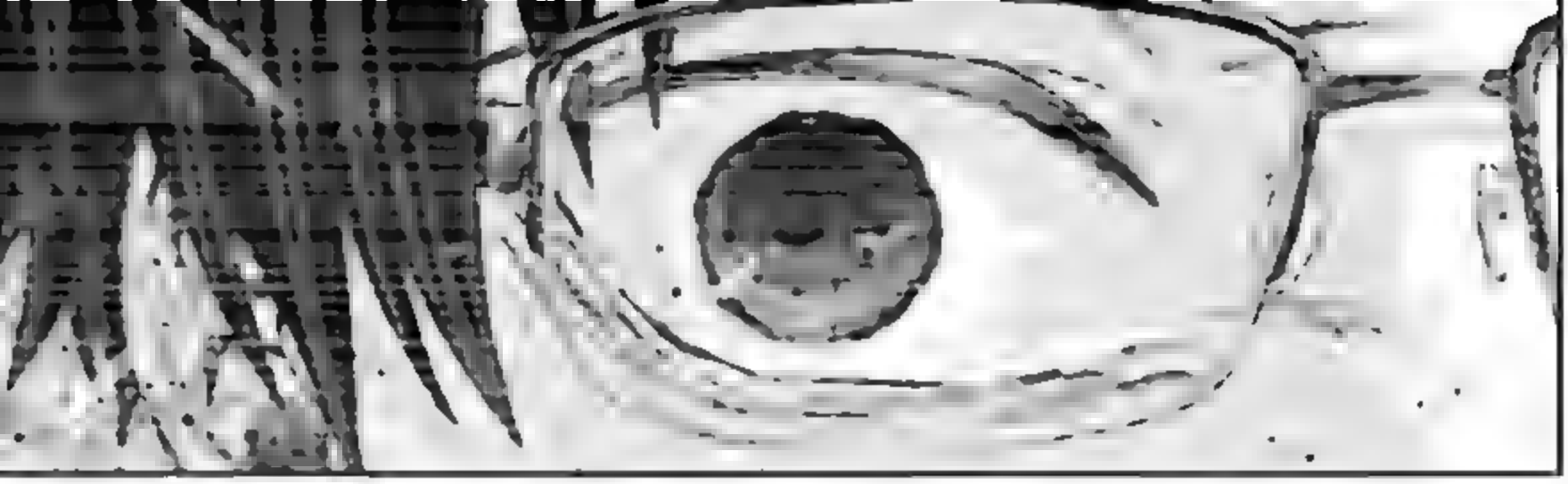
...

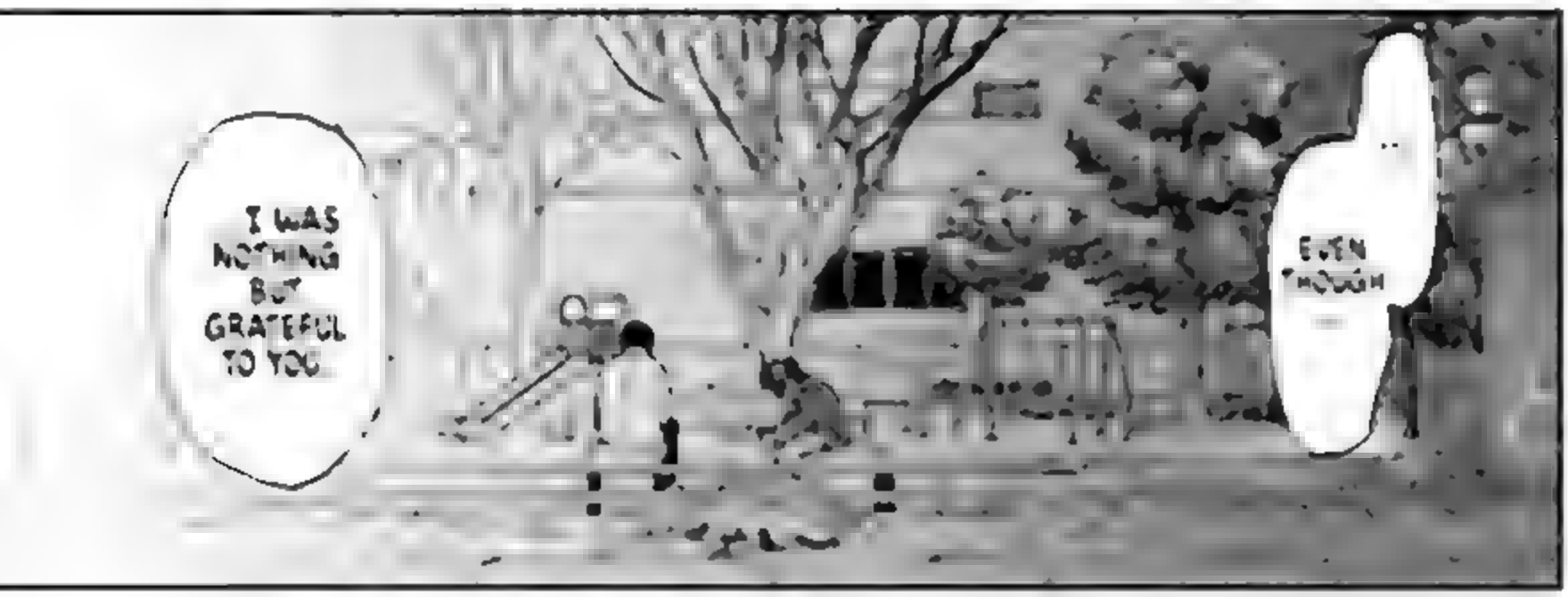
...I LASHED OUT AT YOU.

AND THE TRAUMA I SUFFERED BY FAILING THE ENTRANCE EXAMS...

BECAUSE OF THE STRESS OF MY DROPPING GRADES...

I... MADE YOU SHOW ME THAT EXPRESSION.




I WAS NOTHING BUT GRATEFUL TO YOU.
EVEN THOUGH

...WHAT REALLY BROUGHT ME JOY.

YOU HELPED ME REMEMBER...

YOU WERE...

...MY FRIEND, AND YET...

WEEP

I'M SORRY, NATSU-SAWA...

I'M SO SORRY...

I'M NOT DOING THIS ON PURPOSE! I JUST CAN'T STOP IT!

H-HEY, C'MON... DON'T START CRYING NOW...!

PANIC

?!

...

RUB RUB RUB RUB

HUH ...?

I'M OFTEN TEACHING MY FRIENDS FROM HIGH SCHOOL. HELPING THEM BEFORE EXAMS.

YOU KNOW...

...I REALIZED JUST HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO PROPERLY TEACH SOME-ONE.

AND WHILE DOING THAT...

YOU THINK I COULD GIVE YOU MY FINAL ANSWER FOR THAT?

SO... THAT FAVOR YOU ASKED OF ME ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...

TEACHING THE OTHER GUYS BACK THEN, LIKE IT WAS NOTHING.

YOU WERE PRETTY AMAZING, HUH?

TO TEACH YOU SOMETHING?

YOU TOLD ME...

I'VE GOTTEN A HELL OF A LOT BETTER AT TEACHING OTHERS.

WELL, YOU'RE IN LUCK!

?

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.

...I MIGHT BE THE ONE WHO'LL HAVE TO TEACH YOU, NATSUSAWA.

RIGHT NOW...

...WOULD BE APPRE-CIATED.

NOW THAT...

Chapter 115: After The Mock Exams

I GOTTA ADMIT...

WELL ...

I HEARD YOU'RE ATTENDING CHIDORI, SO...

SAY WHAT? HOW DID...

OH, RIGHT ...

HM?

I SERIOUSLY DIDN'T THINK I'D RUN INTO YOU. NOT WHILE TAKING THE MOCK EXAM, THAT'S FOR SURE.

SORRY ABOUT THAT. I MEAN IT.

NO, DON'T BE.

...YEAH.

WHEN I WAS TALKING WITH HIM AFTER THE GRADUATION CEREMONY, HE FILLED ME IN ON A FEW DETAILS.

DID OUR TEACHER TELL YOU?

DID YOU DECIDE ON CHIDORI...

BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN US?

!

...

...!

I WENT TO CHIDORI BECAUSE I WANTED TO.

...

IT'S WEIGHING DOWN ON HIM

I DON'T REGRET MAKING THAT DECISION AT ALL.

AND EVERY DAY'S BEEN A BLAST SO FAR.

I FOUND A REASON TO APPLY FOR CHIDORI...

AND THAT'S WHY I MADE IT MY FIRST CHOICE.

RIGHT ...

...

IF YOU'RE FEELING GUILTY THINKING THAT YOU WERE THE REASON, THEN YOU GOT IT ALL WRONG.

SO...

WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU SHOULD BE ATTENDING KODEMARI HIGH BY NOW, RIGHT?
WAP
?!
D-DID I TELL YOU I GOT ACCEPTED?!
OR MAYBE... THE TEACHERS TOLD YOU?
NAH, NOT AT ALL.
I MEAN, DO I SEEM THE TYPE TO HAVE CASUAL BANTER WITH THE TEACHERS?
SO THEN...
YOU DIDN'T EVEN CONSIDER...
...THAT I'D FLUNK THE ENTRANCE EXAMS?
Even though it seemed unlikely for me to make it when we last talked...
...
WELL...
NO...

THE POSSIBILITY NEVER CROSSED MY MIND.

I MEAN, THE THING IS...

YOU KNOW, NATSU-SAWA...

SAY WHAT?!

I WAS THINKING OF MAKING MY WAY OVER THERE, ACTUALLY.

...IF WE HADN'T RUN INTO EACH OTHER RIGHT AFTER THE MOCK EXAM ENDED...

Though I'd probably stick out like a sore thumb.

WH-WHERE DID THAT COME FROM?

YOU'RE A LOT MORE HONEST THAN YOU USED TO BE.

YOU'VE CHANGED QUITE A BIT.

...HAD QUITE THE INFLUENCE ON ME...

I GUESS THE GUYS I'VE BEEN SURROUND-ING MYSELF WITH...

STILL, I'VE CHANGED, HUH?

...

OH, YOU KNOW ...

WHAT GIRL?

DOES THAT INCLUDE THAT GIRL?

GASP

は、

...!

...

Probably

...

THE ONE WITH SILVER HAIR.

WELL...

HUH?!

DO YOU MEAN HO- WAIT, HOW DO YOU EVEN KNOW HER?!

I WAS STUDYING UP A BIT MORE AT THE CRAM SCHOOL...

SO I ENDED UP HEADING HOME LATE MYSELF.

YESTER- DAY AFTER THE MOCK EXAM...

...AS I PASSED BY THE TRAIN STATION, I SAW YOU TWO TOGETHER.

AND SO, TODAY. .

GOOD THING WE BOTH WORE COATS...

YOU CAN NEVER TELL WHO'S WATCHING, EH?

I WAS WAITING FOR YOU OUTSIDE IN HOPES OF TALKING WITH YOU...
WHEN SHE HAPPENED TO WALK PAST ME.
Excuse me?
AND SO, I TOOK MY CHANCE TO ASK ABOUT YOU.
SO THAT'S WHAT THAT WAS ABOUT...?
AND HOW DID HOSHINA-SAN...HOW DID SHE REACT?
SHE WASN'T TOO SCARED, WAS SHE...?
OH...WELL, I GUESS I TOOK HER BY SURPRISE, BECAUSE SHE LOOKED AT ME LIKE I WAS A GHOST. SO MUCH SO THAT IT EVEN THREW ME OFF.
BUT SHE DID HELP ME OUT AND TELL ME WHERE YOU'D BE.
SO FOR THAT, MIND GIVING HER MY THANKS WHEN YOU NEXT SEE HER?
FOR HELPING YOU FIND ME?
I MEAN, THAT TOO, BUT...
THANK YOU! I APPRE-CIATE IT.
...AH!
EXCUSE ME...!
YEAH ...?
...

WOULD YOU PLEASE LISTEN TO WHAT [illegible] HAS TO SAY?

THIS OF YOU, BUT...

...TO FACE OTHERS HEAD-ON WITHOUT RUNNING AWAY, SO...

HE'S ABLE...

I'LL ACCEPT WHATEVER MIGHT BE BURDENING YOU, TOO...

I'M SURE

AND WHEN I HEARD THAT...

I FELT LIKE I WAS GIVEN THE LAST PUSH I NEEDED.

IS SHE A FRIEND FROM YOUR SCHOOL?

She did stand out a lot...

FRIEND, YEAH. BUT FROM A DIFFERENT SCHOOL.

...

I... SEE...

...

YEAH ...?

I HELPED HER PREPARE FOR THE MOCK EXAM...

AND SOME-WHERE ALONG THE WAY, I DECIDED TO TAKE A SHOT AT IT, TOO.

THAT EXPRESSION OF HIS...

I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM MAKE THAT SORT OF FACE BEFORE.

GENUINELY AM THANK-FUL TO THAT GIRL.

HONESTLY... I'M STILL NOT SURE.

I SIMPLY APPRECIATE THAT.

YOU FEEL MOTIVATED AGAIN, RIGHT?

...GOING TO T-UNIVERSITY...

ALLOWED US...

MEET AGAIN LIKE THIS.

...THEN I WANT US...

...TO BE PROPER RIVALS THIS TIME.

I HOPE YOU WON'T REGRET SAYING THAT.

ON THAT NOTE... HOW DID YOU DO ON THE MOCK EXAM THIS TIME AROUND?

ERP...

I SMILE

...!

SAME HERE!

BAP

THE FIRST DAY WAS... ROUGH, TO SAY THE LEAST.

MUMBLE MUMBLE...

I HONESTLY THOUGHT...

Anyway!

HOW ABOUT TODAY?

I MEAN, WE CAN DO SO NOW BECAUSE WE TALKED IT THROUGH...

MAYBE THINGS WOULD'VE BEEN DIFFERENT IF WE HAD COMMUNICATED LIKE THIS BACK THEN?

...WHY ARE YOU HAPPY ABOUT THAT?

GRRR

Heh, pretty good if I do say so myself.

...FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.

...I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO TALK WITH HIDAKA LIKE THIS...

...TO ERASE THE LINE THAT SEPARATED US...

AND THE REASON I WAS ABLE...

...IT'S STARTING TO MAKE SENSE TO ME.

BUT THAT'S NOT ALL THAT.

...GIVE UP ON THEM EITHER.

I DON'T WANT TO...

I JUST DON'T LIKE THAT PEOPLE GOTTA DOUBT YOU LIKE THIS.

...THAT HIS REASON ISN'T JUST BECAUSE HE WANTS TO STAY WITH...

BUT...

I'D BE WILLING TO BET...

IT WAS ALL...

GIVE-AND-TAKE, AS THEY SAY.

THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO BE FRIENDS, RIGHT?

...YOU'RE A GREAT GUY THROUGH AND THROUGH. SO DON'T SWEAT IT!

BUT THE WAY WE SEE IT...

...KNOW THAT YOU'RE NOT THAT LAME OF A GUY.

AND I TOO...

SHE IS

SOMEONE WHO CAN ALWAYS WORK TOWARD BECOMING BETTER

IT MADE ME HAPPY.

SO, THANK YOU.

...I WILL SURELY...

...COME TO REGRET IT IN THE FUTURE.

...THAT I'VE BEEN WATCHING ALL THIS TIME.

SO, PLEASE...

DON'T ERASE THE NATSUSAWA-KUN...

I'M EX-HAUST-ED...

FWUMP

...THANKS TO THEM.

OH, A MESSAGE FROM KAORUKO...

Kaoruko Waguri
Congrats on finishing the mock exa

Madoka
Yooo! How did the exam go?!

SORRY FOR SUDDENLY CALLING OUT TO YOU. MY NAME IS HIDAKA.

I'M FRIENDS WITH THIS GUY CALLED NATSUSAWA, AND...

I WANT TO PROPERLY...

...APOLOGIZE TO HIDAKA.

I HOPE THEY WERE ABLE TO TALK AFTER THAT...

Natsusawa
Thanks for yesterday. Hidaka and I got to talk it through.

!

Kaoruko Waguri

TAK

PHEW

That's a relief. Did you manage to make up?

Sure did. Thanks for the assist.

You told Hidaka where I was, right?

I really have to get used talking to boys already...

THAT'S GOOD... TO BE HONEST, I WAS STILL A BIT HUNG UP ON MY REACTION THEN...

Told me to thank you as well.

Oh, I didn't do much.

BUT...I'M RELIEVED TO HEAR EVERYTHING WORKED OUT.

So yeah, thanks.

That's all I wanted to tell you.

TRAIN PASSING ON LINE 13.

PLEASE BE CARE-FUL WHILE-

I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING TO SLEEP LIKE A BABY TONIGHT...

Don't worry about it. I'm just glad everything's fine now. We're probably both exhausted from the exams, right? Let's both get some rest.

Sleep Well

...

LATELY...

I FEEL LIKE...

...SOMETHING'S BEEN TUGGING AT MY HEARTSTRINGS...

GATAK

GOTOK

GOTOK

GATAK

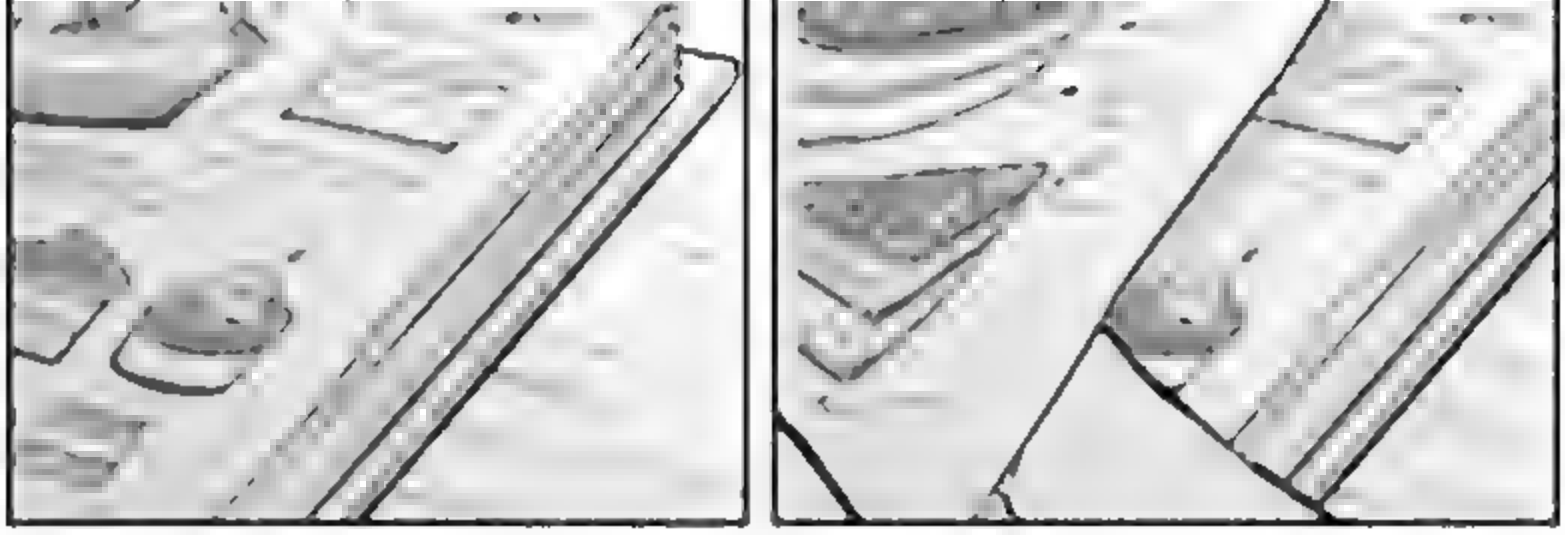
...THAT I ABSOLUTELY SHOULDN'T FIND THE CAUSE OF IT.

BUT I HAVE THIS FEELING...

11/ DWP

...

I DON'T WANNA... MAKE THINGS HARDER FOR HER.



I'M READY. LET'S GO.

TE THEATER

CLAY

DA

DAM

IT'S HORROR MOVIE TIME!

Chapter 1 The Horror Movie

TODAY, KAORUKO-SAN AND I ARE ON A DATE.

WE PLANNED TO WATCH A MOVIE TOGETHER.

HOW-EVER...

IT'S CLEAR AS DAY THAT SHE'S FEELING ANXIOUS.

AND YET, SHE'S STILL MUNCHING ON HER POP-CORN WITHOUT STOPPING.

WE CAN FINALLY TAKE IT EASY NOW THAT OUR EXAMS ARE OVER!

I WAS THINKING OF WATCHING A MOVIE OR SOME-THING...

WHA ...?!

HRM...

DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS FOR YOUR NEXT DAY OFF, RINTARO-KUN?

HM?

...

BUT THE MOVIE I WAS THINKING OF WATCHING... WELL...

SNIFFLE

DEJECTED

WUEH?!

I MEAN, I THOUGHT ABOUT IT! I REALLY DID!

We finallu have a bit of free time, and yet...

WHY... DIDN'T YOU INVITE ME?

WAP

...?

IT'S THIS ONE RIGHT HERE.

YOU'RE NO GOOD WITH SCARY STUFF, RIGHT?

WHOA

WHOA

WE CAN JUST... WATCH A DIFFERENT ONE IF YOU'D LIKE?

I'm in no rush to watch that one, either.

...

N-NO!

IT HAS TO BE THAT ONE!

HUH?!

WELL, IT'S EASY TO ESTIMATE HOW BAD SHE IS WITH ANYTHING HORROR...
JUST WHEN LOOKING AT HOW SHE ACTED BACK AT THE THEME PARK.
...!!!
BOO!
!!!
SORRY SORRY.
FOR A WHILE NOW...
THE SCREAMS OF THE PEOPLE IN FRONT OF US HAVE BEEN GETTING LOUDER AND LOUDER...
AND WHEN I THINK ABOUT WHAT AWAITS ME FOR THE NEXT FEW MINUTES, I JUST
There's something hiding over there
You didn't have to tell me!
WELL, WE GOT THE SEATS NEXT TO THE EXIT, SO LEAVING IS ALWAYS AN OPTION.
NOM
NOM
NOM
JUST LET ME KNOW IF IT'S TOO MUCH. THERE'S NO SHAME IN LEAVING EARLY, YOU KNOW?
!
I... I'LL BE FINE!
I AGREED TO JOIN YOU, SO I'LL STAY UNTIL THE MOVIE'S OVER!
ARE YOU SURE ...?
THOUGH, THIS ONE'S APPARENTLY NOT ALL THAT SCARY FOR BEING A HORROR MOVIE.
Those words hold no meaning for someone who can't stand anything that is even remotely scary...
I DIDN'T THINK SHE'D BE GIVING ME SUCH A DOUBTFUL STARE.

I GOTTA ASK... WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO WATCH A HORROR MOVIE OF ALL THINGS?

SHE'S ALREADY EATEN HALF OF THE POPCORN IN HER BUCKET...

EATING SOME MORE POPCORN WILL HELP ME RELAX!

I'M FINE! I PROMISE!

BACK AT THE THEME PARK, YOU SAID YOU WOULD PUT UP WITH IT FOR MY BIRTHDAY, BUT NOW...

WELL, I'VE GOT NO REAL REASON FOR IT, ACTUALLY.

MHM...

AND ALTHOUGH I'M STILL SCARED EVEN NOW...

...I'LL EVENTUALLY GET USED TO IT IF I KEEP WATCHING THEM, RIGHT?

...IF WE HAD A SHARED INTEREST IN SOMETHING.

I JUST THOUGHT IT'D BE NICE...

...DOESN'T SOUND SO BAD, DOES IT?

AND HAVING MORE THINGS THAT WE BOTH ENJOY...

SMILE

SO, YEAH. THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO TAG ALONG.

HUH?

NOT TO MENTION... I KNOW I'LL BE JUST FINE! AFTER ALL...

FWP

OH, THE LIGHTS TURNED OFF.

BEING WITH YOU GIVES ME CONFIDENCE.

...!

PLUS, IT WORKED OUT JUST FINE BACK AT THE THEME PARK, TOO.

IT'S STARTING... MY HEART IS RACING...

SURE...

...IF I CAN FOCUS ON THE MOVIE LIKE THIS.

ISN'T SHE ALREADY AT HER LIMIT...?

!

SHE'S JUST CLOSING HER EYES AT THIS

I'M NOT REALLY BUYING THAT

JUMP AT THE SCREEN LIKE

FWAP

I CAN'T TELL IF I FEEL SUCH JOY...

BECAUSE I GET TO WATCH SOMETHING I LIKE...

OR IF...

THERE'S A SEPARATE REASON FOR THAT...

I FIGURED IT'D BE FINE IF I JUST WATCHED IT ON MY OWN...

IT'S BEING A HUMAN BEING

BUT EITHER WAY I CAN'T FEEL LIKE THIS

BUT I GOTTA SAY...

...THIS HAS ITS OWN MERITS.

!!

THOUGH I DO FEEL SORTA BAD FOR HER.

IT'S FINALLY OVER..!

は

AHHHH

...

ARE YOU FEELING BETTER NOW?

I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D ACTUALLY STICK IT OUT UNTIL THE END.

I'M IM-PRESSED.

NOPE, NOT BETTER AT ALL.

DO YOU THINK... WE COULD TALK ON THE PHONE FOR A LITTLE WHILE BEFORE I HEAD TO BED?

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT...

I'M JUST USED TO IT, IS ALL.

はぁ！ SIGH!

STILL, THAT MOVIE WAS **TERRIFYING!** I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU CAN JUST SIT THROUGH THAT LIKE IT'S NOTHING!

Yeah!

THEY ACTUALLY HAD PRETTY GOOD TEAM-WORK.

THAT WAS REALLY COOL TO LOOK AT!

THE SCENE OF THE PROTA-GONISTS DEFEATING THE MON-STER...

OH, BUT...

TURN

AND ALTHOUGH I'M STILL SCARED EVEN NOW...

I'LL EVENTUALLY GET USED TO IT IF I KEEP WATCHING THEM, RIGHT?

IF WE HAD A SHARED INTEREST IN SOMETHING.

I JUST THOUGHT IT'D BE NICE...

...DOESN'T SOUND SO BAD, DOES IT?

AND HAVING MORE THINGS THAT WE BOTH ENJOY...

The way they had this militaristic feeling was neat, too!

I totally get it

WELL ...

THEN ...

ARE YOU SURE?

YOU TAGGED ALONG WITH ME TODAY, AFTER ALL.

SO... WHY DON'T YOU DECIDE WHERE WE GO ON OUR NEXT DATE?

SOUNDS GOOD, LET'S DO THAT.

YAY!

FWSH

COULD WE CHECK THAT OUT TOGETHER?

THERE'S A PATISSERIE I WAS INTERESTED IN, ACTUALLY!

DIDN'T SHE EAT AN ENTIRE BUCKET OF POPCORN ALL ON HER OWN?

All that scaring and screaming got me hungry

SAY... MIND WE GRAB SOME-THING TO EAT?

...

GROWL

WHERE'S THAT PLACE AT—

YEAH?

HEY, RINTARO-KUN?

...

WEREN'T YOU SHAKING IN YOUR BOOTS JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO?

THAT DOESN'T MATTER!

Not for the time being, though...

LET'S WATCH A HORROR MOVIE AGAIN SOMEDAY!

HUH? WHY?

Eeek..!

I MEAN...

I GET TO CLING TO HIM AS MUCH AS I WANT, AFTER ALL.

I'm impressed you can eat this much...

I wanna eat some ramen!

AND I'LL TAKE ANY CHANCE I GET TO DO THAT.

SUZUMI
STARE
...
ERM... KAORUKO-CHAN?
KLAK
KLAK
THIS IS NERVE-RACKING...
I FEEL LIKE YOU'LL MESS UP HIS RHYTHM IF YOU KEEP STARING LIKE THAT.
Ah!
I'M SORRY! DON'T MIND ME!

OOP-SIE...

Ha ha ha!

GRANTED, THERE ARE TIMES YOU'D BE LOOKING AT THE FOOD WITH A STARVING GAZE, BUT I FEEL LIKE IT'S DIFFERENT NOW.

定食

STARE

Looks delicious...

OH, REALLY...?

STILL, WHAT'S GOT YOU SO INFATUATED WITH THE COOKING PROCESS? IT'S RARE SEEING YOU UNABLE TO TEAR YOUR EYES AWAY.

WELL ...

IS THERE SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND?

I WAS JUST ADMIRING...

...THE WHOLE PROCESS OF COOKING FOOD.

YOU HAD TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT THE SMALLEST THINGS AT EVERY POSSIBLE MOMENT.

I REALIZED THAT.

HE'S SO EASY...

Might as well go all out.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO EAT TODAY, KAORUKO-CHAN?

YOU'RE SO TALENTED, SHIGERU-SAN!

I THINK IT'S AMAZ-ING!

I CAN FINALLY FOCUS BACK ON WORK SINCE MY EXAMS ARE OVER AFTER ALL!

Absolutely.

That made you happy, hun?

YOU'RE SUCH A HARD-WORKING GIRL, AREN'T YOU?

MIND TAKING OUR ORDERS?

COM-ING!

HEY, WAGURI-CHAN!

...SO I GOTTA GIVE IT MY ALL WHILE I CAN.

NOT TO MENTION... THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS I CAN LOOK FORWARD TO...

ALL RIGHT, THAT'S ENOUGH! SHE'S STILL ON HER SHIFT RIGHT NOW! HURRY UP AND PLACE YOUR ORDER!

HUH?!

WE GOT AN OPEN SEAT, SO JOIN US!

REALLY?! SPILL THE TEA!

WAIT A SECOND... YOU HAVE A BOYFRIEND, DON'T YOU?! I CAN TELL BY THAT LOOK!

Waaah!

Chapter 115: The Patisserie From Back Then

Okay!
I'm heading out, too!
SEE YOU TOMOR-ROW!
Yeah!
THANKS FOR TODAY!
CLOSED
...
STARE
ACTUALLY, I MADE PLANS WITH KA—WAGURI-SAN, SO I DON'T THINK THAT'LL WORK.
S-SORRY ...?
AH...
OH, RINTARO! CAN YOU HELP US OUT THIS SATURDAY?
?!
Kaoruko-san!
YOU DID SO WHEN SHE WAS HELPING OUT OVER CHRIST-MAS.
WH-WHY...?!
I ALREADY KNOW YOU'RE CALLING HER BY HER FIRST NAME.
NO, IT'S FINE... IT'S JUST, YOU DON'T HAVE TO FORCE YOUR-SELF TO CALL HER "WAGURI-SAN," YOU KNOW?
...
R-RIGHT...
EITHER WAY, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. JUST HAVE FUN WITH HER, YEAH?

SO THE BAKERY YOU WANTED TO CHECK OUT...

YUP.

Patisserie Noisette

THIS IS IT?

Y-YEAH...

IT'S THE ONE YOUR FAMILY WENT TO BACK WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE, RIGHT?

IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY...

IT WAS A ONE-MAN BUSINESS OWNED BY A FOREIGNER.

AND IT WAS FAIRLY POPULAR BACK AT THE TIME.

BUT THEY TOOK ME TO A PATISSERIE ONE DAY.

NO CLUE IF MY PARENTS WANTED ME TO CHEER UP THROUGH THAT...

DIDN'T EXPECT TO BE REMINDED OF IT LIKE THIS.

ACTUALLY, HOW DID YOU KNOW?

WELL...

YOUR MOTHER TOLD ME ABOUT IT WHEN I WAS OVER TO VISIT.

FOR THE MOST PART, I WAS JUST CURIOUS.

EVER SINCE YOU MENTIONED IT TO US BACK THEN.

I WANTED TO SEE THE PERSON WHOSE CAKE HAD SUCH AN IMPACT ON YOU...

TO WITNESS WHAT SORT OF INDIVI-DUAL HE IS...

AND, OF COURSE, TO TASTE THE CAKE FOR MYSELF.

THOUGH, COULD IT BE THAT... YOU VISIT THEM FROM TIME TO TIME?

NO, NOT AT ALL. IT'S PRETTY FAR FROM OUR PLACE...

AND I HAVEN'T BEEN THERE SINCE THAT ONE TIME ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.

OH, I SEE!

THEN WHY DON'T WE CHECK IT OUT?

FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE, RIGHT?

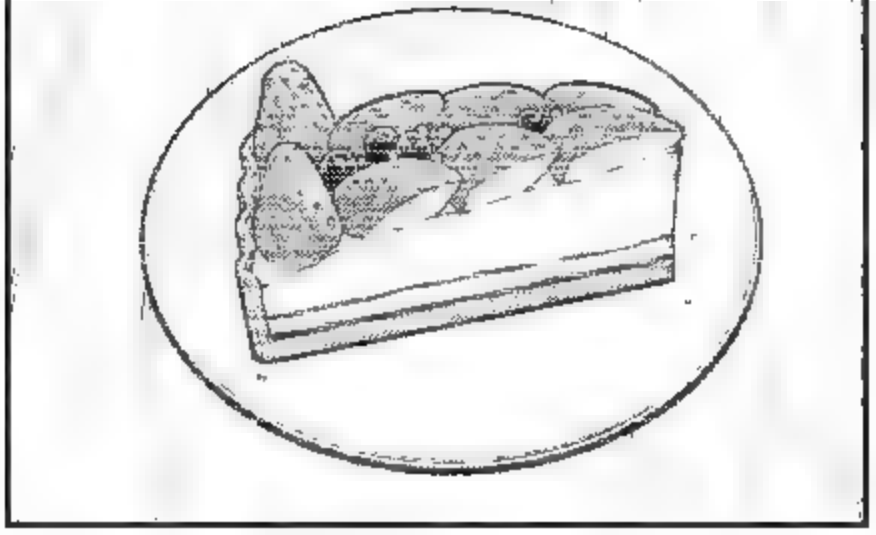
FWUMP

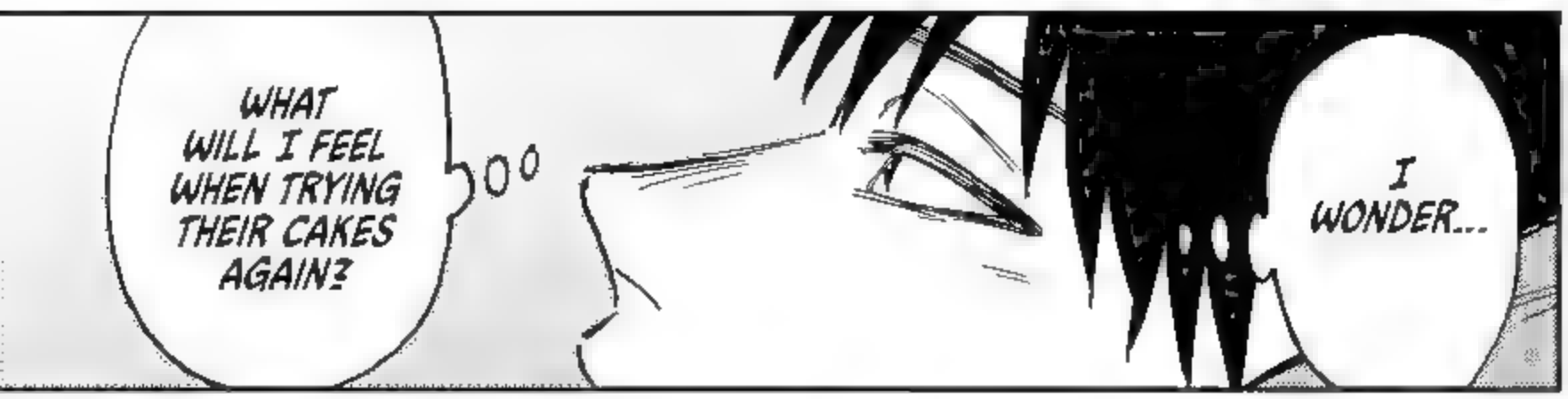
I WON-DER...

IS HE STILL WORKING THERE?

I DIDN'T THINK I'D BE GOING THERE AGAIN...

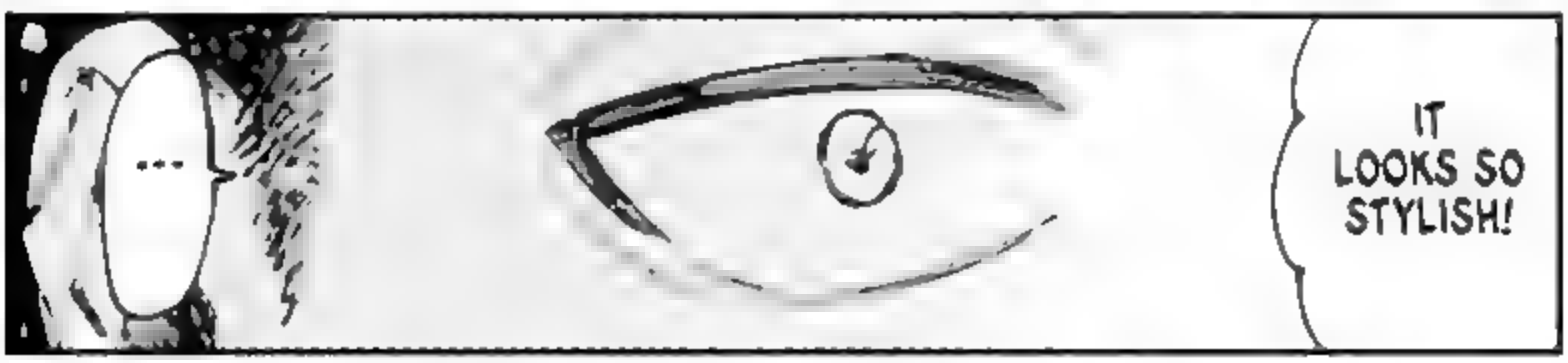
...

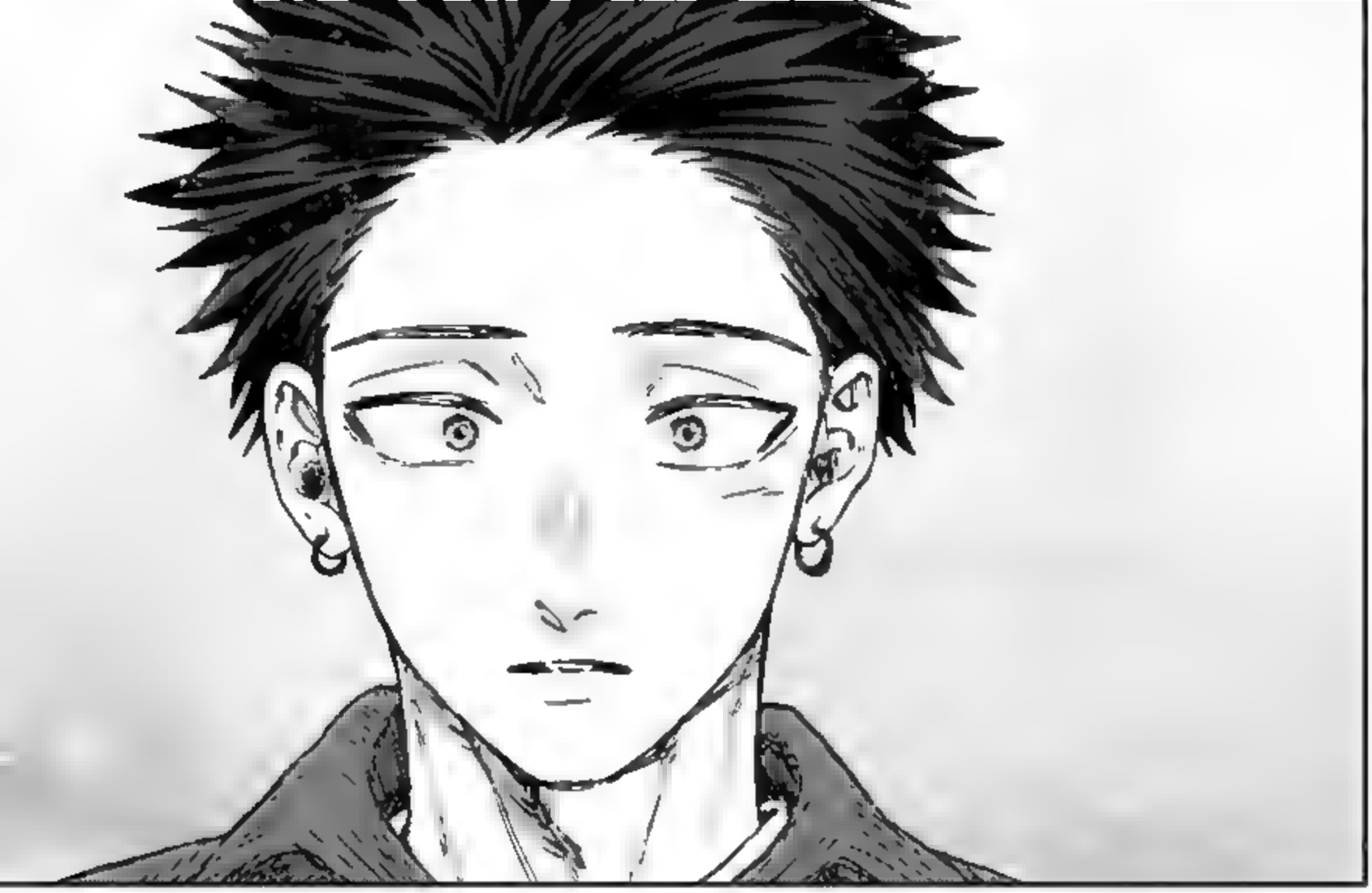


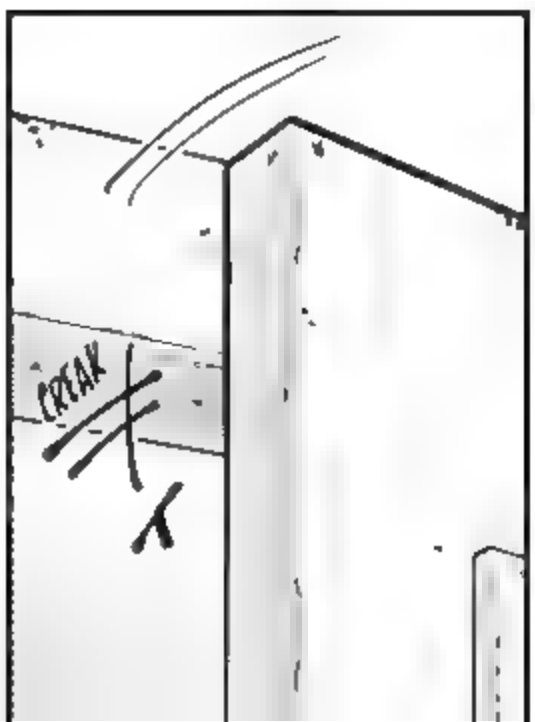

WHAT WILL I FEEL WHEN TRYING THEIR CAKES AGAIN?
I WONDER...

WELL...
I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO NOW.

THIS MUST BE IT!


...
IT LOOKS SO STYLISH!




CREAK

PULL
C'MON!
LET'S HEAD INSIDE!

WELCOME!

MY MEMORIES OF THE PLACE AREN'T EXACTLY FRESH IN THE MIND.

TO BE HONEST...

...OR THE PLEASANT MOOD LINGERING IN THE AIR...

BUT THOSE SLICES OF CAKE, SHINING LIKE GEMSTONES...

IT TOOK ONLY A MOMENT...

...FOR ME TO BE TRANSPORTED BACK IN TIME... TO THAT DAY.

THE FEELINGS GREETING ME WHEN I WAS MET WITH THESE SIGHTS...

...WERE EXACTLY THE SAME FROM ALL THOSE YEARS BACK THEN.

...

!

WE GOTTA LINE UP QUICK.

WOW... IT'S REALLY CROWD-ED!

WELL, IT HAPPENS.

Patisserie Nisette

DOESN'T LOOK LIKE... HE'S BACK IN THE KITCHEN, EITHER.

They all look delicious!

Oh!

THEY HAVE A GLASS CASE WITH ALL THEIR CAKES! WHICH ONES SHOULD WE TRY?

HMMM...

...

THIS ONE HERE LOOKS ESPECIALLY...

...

...

...

...

!

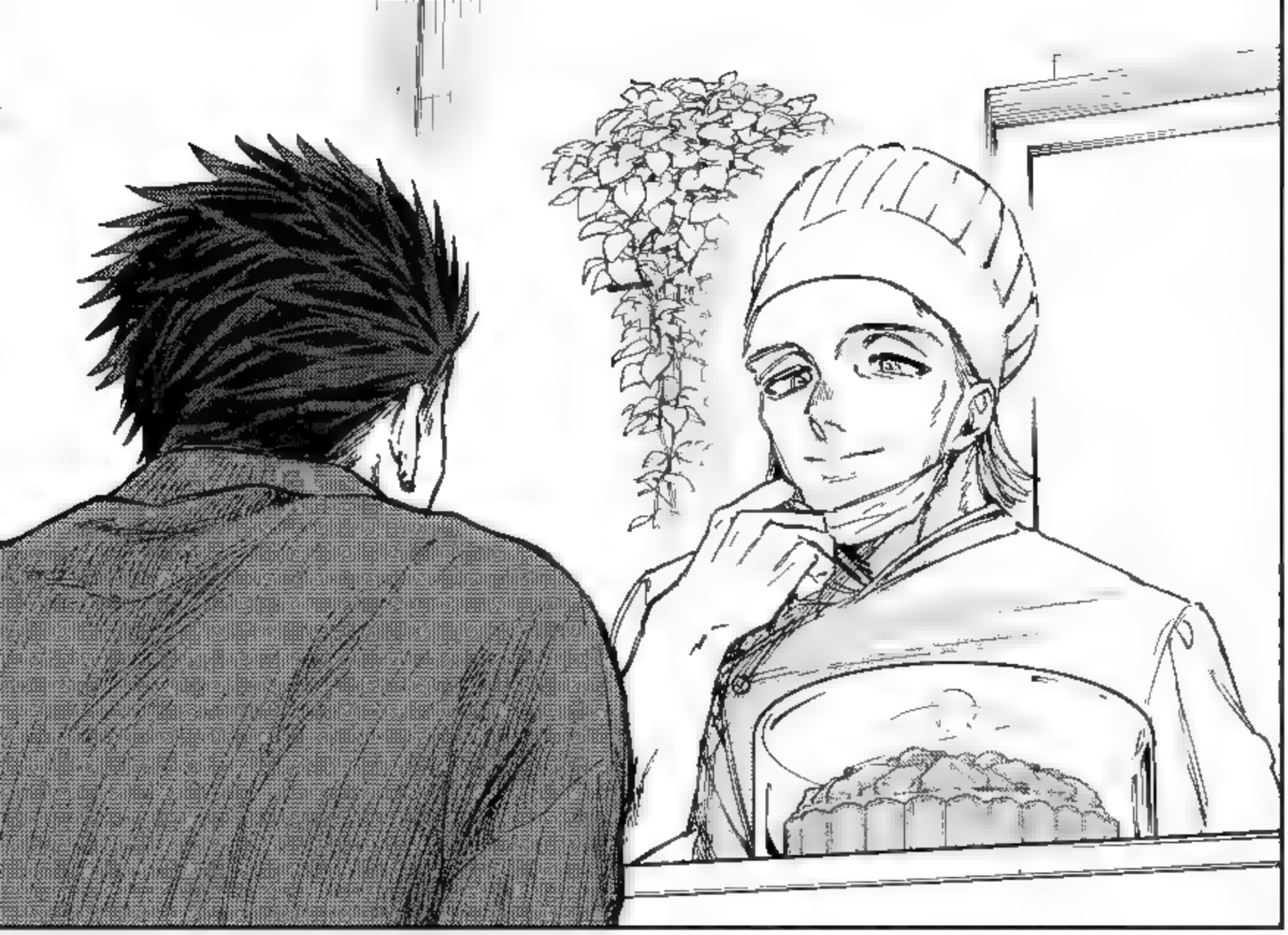
SAY...

DO YOU LIKE BAKING CAKES?

...!!

WAP

HUH...?



...!
IT'S HIM...

SEEING THAT EXPRESSION OF YOURS...
MADE ME QUITE HAPPY, YOU KNOW.

...WITH THE BRIGHTEST SMILE ON HIS FACE...

THE PERSON WHO MADE THOSE CAKES...

IT REALLY IS HIM.

...

Don't they? In fact, this month's recommendation is...

NO, IT'S FINE! STILL, ALL OF THESE CAKES LOOK INCREDIBLY DELICIOUS!

SORRY IF I STARTLED YOU JUST NOW.

WELCOME TO OUR ESTABLISHMENT.

DO YOU LIKE BAKING CAKES?

SAY...

WAIT, HOW...

...HM?

...DID HE KNOW THAT?

LET'S GET A FIRST TASTE!

ぱっ GLEAM

OH, I CAN'T WAIT TO DIG IN!

...!

MHM?

YOU HAD THE SAME EXPRESSION EARLIER.

WH-WHAT FACE DID I MAKE?

I got no clue...

WHEN YOU WERE CHECKING OUT THEIR SELECTION!

A BITTER AND FRUSTRATED ONE.

THAT'S WHY THAT EMPLOYEE EARLIER COULD TELL THAT YOU'RE INVOLVED WITH BAKERY.

IF I HAD TO GUESS...

...ALL I REALLY PAID ATTENTION TO IS THE TASTE OR THE APPEAL.

I MEAN, COMPARED TO YOU...

THAT IS RATHER TRUE.

...SO TO US, YOUR IMPRESSIONS ARE THE GREATEST REWARD WE COULD ASK FOR.

THAT SAID, WE SPEND EACH AND EVERY DAY HONING OUR CRAFT TO SEE THOSE SMILES FROM OUR CUSTOMERS...

SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

HOW'S THE TASTE OF OUR LABOR?